

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

A Discourse with the Ash‘arites

Authored By:

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*In the Name of Allāh, the Most Merciful,
the Ever Bestower of Mercy*

Author's Introduction

Peace be upon you, and the mercy of Allāh and His blessings.

To proceed:

I reviewed the transcription of a lecture of mine entitled “*A Discourse with the Ash‘arites*,” which some of the brothers had transcribed and indexed. I then appended to it what I deemed important additions.

I ask Allāh to accept it and make it of benefit to His servants. Verily, He is the Most Merciful, the Ever Bestower of Mercy.

Among that which may increase the benefit derived from this book is the review of the following resources:

- **The Belief of the Ash‘arites: Presentation and Critique** (video/audio): <https://www.islamancient.com/?p=16981>
- **Refuting the Foundations of the Ash‘arites** (audio): <https://www.islamancient.com/?p=17495>
- **Affirming Salafī Principles in Refuting the Collective Fatwā Declaring the Ash‘arites Among the Approved Sects** (book), with an introduction by a selection of esteemed scholars: <https://www.islamancient.com/?p=15360>

Additionally, one will find further explanations of the works of Shaykh al-Islām Ibn Taymiyyah—such as “*al-Ḥamawīyyah*” and “*al-Wāsiṭiyyah*”—in video, audio, and written formats on the IslamAncient website, for those who seek to increase in knowledge.

Peace be upon you, and the mercy of Allāh and His blessings.

Dr. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz ibn Rayyis ar-Rayyis

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27 / 8 / 1442 AH



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*In the Name of Allāh, the Most Merciful,
the Ever Bestower of Mercy*

Introduction

Peace be upon you, and the mercy of Allāh and His blessings.

To proceed:

The discussion concerning the Ash‘arites is of great importance and urgent necessity, for the Ash‘arite creed has been officially adopted in many Muslim-majority countries. If people were to come to know the true reality of this creed, which its very founder—Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ash‘arī—opposed, then the fair-minded among them would abandon it and instead embrace the creed that Allāh’s Messenger ﷺ was upon, along with his noble Companions ﷺ, such as Abū Bakr, ‘Umar, ‘Uthmān, ‘Alī, the rest of the Ten Promised Paradise, the Emigrants ^[1], the Helpers ^[2], and those who follow them with excellence. As Allāh ﷻ says:

وَالسَّابِقُونَ السَّابِقُونَ
الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَالْأَنْصَارُ وَالَّذِينَ
اتَّبَعُوهُمْ بِإِحْسَانٍ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ
وَرَضُوا عَنْهُ وَأَعَدَّ لَهُمْ

^[1] The early Muslims who emigrated from Mecca to Medina, known as **Al-Muhājirūn**.

^[2] Those from Medina, known as **Al-Anṣār**, who accepted Islam and sheltered Muslim emigrants from Mecca.

جَنَّتٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا أَبَدًا ذَلِكَ الْفَوْزُ
الْعَظِيمُ ﴿١٠٠﴾

{ As for the foremost—the first of the Muhājirīn (Emigrants) and the Anṣār (Helpers)—and those who follow them in goodness, Allāh is pleased with them and they are pleased with Him. And He has prepared for them Gardens under which rivers flow, to stay there for ever and ever. That is the ultimate triumph. ﴿١٠٠﴾⁽¹⁾

O Allāh, make us among them, O Lord of the worlds.

Many
Ordinary
Ash‘arites Are
Unaware of
the Reality of
Their Creed

It is therefore essential for anyone who subscribes to the Ash‘arite creed to recognize its true reality—a creed that was opposed by the very one to whom it is attributed, Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ash‘arī. Many among the general masses who are told, “You are Ash‘arites,” are in fact unaware of what the Ash‘arite doctrine entails. Among the things they do not know are the following:

Firstly, they do not know that the Ash‘arites assert that Allāh is neither inside the world nor outside of it, neither connected to it nor separate from it!

Secondly, they do not know that the Ash‘arites claim that Allāh’s actions have no wisdom behind them!

⁽¹⁾ [At-Tawbah 9:100].

Thirdly, they do not know that the Ash‘arites hold that:

“When wood burns in fire, it is not the fire that causes the wood to burn. Rather, the wood burns merely in the fire’s presence!”

They also assert:

“Marital relations are not what cause offspring—rather, the child simply comes into existence at the moment of marital consummation!”

They reject any real notion of causality. Thus, if a man were to strike another on the head and split it open, the Ash‘arite would claim:

“The head was not split because of the strike—rather, it split merely at the moment of the strike, not due to it!”

Fourthly, they are unaware that a faction of the Ash‘arites claims:

“The Prophet ﷺ is no longer a prophet after his passing, and his prophethood ceased with his death—thus, in his grave, he is not a prophet.”

Fifthly: They are unaware that the Ash‘arites assert that Allāh ﷻ—who says:

﴿بَلْ يَدَاهُ مَبْسُوطَتَانِ﴾

﴿Rather, Both His Hands are extended.﴾⁽¹⁾

﴿مَا مَنَعَكَ أَنْ تَسْجُدَ لِمَا خَلَقْتَ بِيَدَيَّ﴾

﴿What prevented you from prostrating to what I created
with My Own Two Hands?﴾⁽²⁾

﴿بِيَدِكَ الْخَيْرُ﴾

﴿All good is in Your Hands.﴾⁽³⁾

—did not intend by these *āyāt* (verses) the Attribute of “**Hand**.”
Rather, the Ash‘arites claim:

“No, O Lord! You do not mean ‘**Hand**’ by these *āyāt* (verses);
rather, You intend blessing and ability.”

Glorified and Exalted is Allāh! Is it conceivable that Allāh—there is
no deity worthy of worship but Him—who made His Qur’ān a guidance
and source of uprightness, as He ﷻ says:

﴿إِنَّ هَذَا الْقُرْآنَ يَهْدِي لِلَّتِي هِيَ أَقْوَمُ﴾

﴿Surely this Qur’ān guides to what is most upright.﴾⁽⁴⁾

⁽¹⁾ [Al-Mā’idah 5:64].

⁽²⁾ [Ṣād 38:75].

⁽³⁾ [Āli ‘Imrān 3:26].

⁽⁴⁾ [Al-Isrā’ 17:9].

—would use the expression “**Hand**” repeatedly to mean nothing more than power and ability? When the **āyāt** (verses) that mention “**the Hand**” and “**the Two Hands**” are so numerous, are we to believe they all refer merely to strength, ability, or blessing?

If that were the case, the Qur’ān would not be guidance—it would misguide us toward meanings contrary to what Allāh intends.

Sixthly: They do not know that the Ash‘arites claim that spoken words do not constitute **kalām** (speech). So when someone delivers a lecture or an address, the Ash‘arites declare that none of this is speech!

Furthermore, they claim:

“The Qur’ān is not the speech of Allāh, nor did Allāh speak it!”

Yet Allāh ﷻ says:

﴿ كَبُرَتْ كَلِمَةً تَخْرُجُ مِنْ أَفْوَاهِهِمْ ﴾

﴿ *What a terrible speech that comes out of their mouths!* ﴾⁽¹⁾

Thereby referring to what exists their mouths as “**speech**.” But the Ash‘arites insist:

⁽¹⁾ [Al-Kahf 18:5].

“It is invalid to refer to what is uttered by the mouth as speech!”

Allāh ﷻ also says:

﴿ وَإِنْ أَحَدٌ مِّنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ اسْتَجَارَكَ فَأَجِرْهُ حَتَّى يَسْمَعَ
كَلِمَةَ اللَّهِ ﴾

﴿ And if anyone from the polytheists asks for your protection [ؕ] ‘O Prophet’, grant it to them so they may hear the Speech of Allāh. ⁽¹⁾ ﴾

Yet the Ash‘arites claim:

“Allāh did not speak this Qur’ān!”

Accordingly, al-Bājūrī openly admitted that the Qur’ān is created. In his “*Commentary on al-Jawharah*,” he states that the scholars differed regarding which of the created things is greatest: the Qur’ān or something else. This is a clear admission on his part that he believes the Qur’ān is created.

The discussion regarding the many doctrinal positions unknown to those who ascribe themselves to the Ash‘arite school is extensive. However, I am certain that every sincere seeker of Allāh and the

⁽¹⁾ [At-Tawbah 9:6].

Hereafter—upon coming to know the reality of the Ash‘arite creed—would disavow it entirely and go further to warn others against it.



Reasons for the Spread of the Ash‘arite Creed

The prevalence of the Ash‘arite creed among the people may be attributed to several reasons, including the following:

First Reason: The Attribution of Ash‘arism to Later Scholars

Many later commentators on *ḥadīth* and exegetes of the Qur’ān are claimed to adhere to the Ash‘arite creed. Undoubtedly, a significant number of them were influenced by Ash‘arism, though their degree of adherence varied—some adopted much of it, while others only a little. However, they were not upon the creed formally established by Abū al-Ma‘ālī al-Juwaynī in his book “*al-Irshād*,” nor that of Fakhr ad-Dīn ar-Rāzī. As a result, many people say:

*“If these commentators are Ash‘arites, and they are scholars,
then we follow them.”*

Second Reason: The Persistent Narrative of an Ash‘arite Majority

Many people constantly repeat the claim that most Muslim-majority countries are Ash‘arite. However, this assertion warrants careful scrutiny. While it is true that many official institutions adopt the Ash‘arite creed, they neither understand it properly nor apply it in their own lives or in the upbringing of their children. They merely repeat that they are Ash‘arites without any fundamental understanding of the reality. Were they to truly know, they would not make such a claim.

Third Reason: Many Who Ascribe to Ash‘arism Assume Their Creed Exalts Allāh

Many who promote Ash‘arism assume that its core premise is affirming **tanzīh** (declaring Allāh’s absolute freedom from any likeness to creation, and from every defect or deficiency). And indeed, every Muslim who loves Allāh and His Messenger ﷺ desires to attain the honor of affirming Allāh’s **tanzīh**. Consequently, some—due to a lack of understanding—assume that affirming Allāh’s Attribute of “**Two Hands**,” as stated in the Qur’ān, necessitates **tashbīh** (likening Allāh to His creation—anthropomorphism). Thus, they argue:

*“In order to uphold Allāh’s **tanzīh**, we must not affirm that He possesses **Two Hands**; rather, we interpret the ‘**Two Hands**’ as referring to ability and blessing, so as to avoid likening Him to created beings.”*

Had they but reflected for a moment, they would have realized the incoherence and weakness of this claim.

Firstly, Allāh ﷻ says:

﴿ بَلْ يَدَاهُ مَبْسُوطَتَانِ ﴾

﴿ *Rather, Both His Hands are extended.* ﴾⁽¹⁾

⁽¹⁾ [Al-Mā‘idah 5:64].

Is it conceivable that Allāh would express something He did not intend? Had Allāh not intended to affirm the Attribute of **Two Hands**, He would not have expressed it in this manner. For to articulate “**Two Hands**” while intending something else entirely would render the Qur’ān not a source of guidance, but a means of misguidance.

Secondly, O Ash‘arites, you argue that in order to avoid *tashbīh* (likening Allāh to His creation—anthropomorphism), the term “**Two Hands**” must be interpreted as “**blessing**” and “**ability**,” since—according to you—hands are only attributes of created beings.

We respond: But does not the created being also possess “**ability**”? And are not charity, kindness, and giving considered “**blessings**”? Then, by your interpretation and reasoning as well, you have fallen into the very *tashbīh* (likening Allāh to His creation—anthropomorphism) you seek to avoid.

Just as you distinguish between an “**Ability**” unique to Allāh and an “**ability**” befitting creation, and a “**Blessing**” from Allāh and a “**blessing**” from creation, then likewise distinguish between a “**Hand**” befitting Allāh and a “**hand**” suitable for creation.

Imām Ibn Khuzaymah stated in “*Kitāb at-Tawhīd*”:

“O people of intellect—monkeys have hands, humans have hands, and each possesses hands in accordance with its nature. That does not necessitate resemblance. Likewise—and to Allāh belongs the highest example—we affirm for Allāh, exalted is He,

Two Hands befitting His majesty. Affirming this does not necessitate likening them to the hands of created beings.”

Thirdly, the Ash‘arites themselves affirm that Allāh has a **Dhāt** (Essence) and that creation also has an essence. They argue that affirming Allāh’s Essence does not imply resemblance to creation, for Allāh’s **Dhāt** (Essence) is unique to Him, just as creation’s essence suits it.

Ahl as-Sunnah wa al-Jamā‘ah say:

“If you accept this regarding Allāh’s Essence, then apply the same logic to His Hand, Face, Anger, Pleasure, and other Divine Attributes.”

Fourthly: The Ash‘arites affirm attributes such as Hearing, Sight, and the seven **ṣifāt ma‘nawiyyah** (the essential or inherent attributes, which are inseparable from Allāh’s Essence and are not, from our perspective, divisible into parts).

We say to them: these attributes also exist in created beings, as Allāh ﷻ says:

﴿ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ مِنْ نُطْفَةٍ أَمْشَاجٍ نَبْتَلِيهِ فَجَعَلْنَاهُ سَمِيعًا
بَصِيرًا ۝ ﴾

{ *For indeed, We alone created humans from a drop of mixed fluids, in order to test them, so We made them hear and see.* ○ }⁽¹⁾

Moreover, Allāh ﷻ says about Himself:

{ *لَيْسَ كَمِثْلِهِ شَيْءٌ وَهُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْبَصِيرُ* ○ }⁽²⁾

{ *There is nothing like Him, for He alone is the All-Hearing, All-Seeing.* ○ }⁽²⁾

Therefore, just as you were able to affirm the attributes of Hearing, Sight, Will, Power, Life, Speech, etc., do likewise for the rest of the attributes! **For the theological treatment of some attributes should be consistent with the treatment of the others.**



⁽¹⁾ [Al-Insān 76:2].

⁽²⁾ [Ash-Shūrā 42:11].

A Brief Account of the Founder of the Ash‘arite Creed: Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ash‘arī

He is ‘Alī ibn Ismā‘īl ibn Ishāq al-Ash‘arī, born in 260 AH. Scholars differed regarding the year of his death, with some stating that he passed away in 324 AH. Ibn ‘Asākir cited this view in his book “*Tabyīn Kadhib al-Muftarī*,” wherein he notes that while scholars unanimously agree on the year of his birth, they differ over the year of his death—though this variance carries little significance.

Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ash‘arī was originally a Mu‘tazilite—a fact that is mass-transmitted and well-established among the scholars, who explicitly affirm that he followed the Mu‘tazilite school before abandoning it. He then adopted the creed later known as “Ash‘arism,” which was a synthesis of the theology of Ibn Kullāb along with additional elements introduced by al-Ash‘arī himself.



Doctrinal Preliminaries Concerning the Ash‘arite Creed

First Preliminary: The People of Truth Are One United Sect

The people of truth constitute a single saved sect. It is therefore incumbent upon us to learn the creed of this saved group so that we may hold fast to it and be among the successful. This matter is grave, not one of jest—for there is but one life, not two.

Al-Bukhārī and Muslim narrated from al-Mughīrah ibn Shu‘bah and Mu‘āwiyah ibn Abī Sufyān, and Muslim also narrated from Jābir ibn ‘Abdillāh, Jābir ibn Samurah, Thawbān, and Sa‘d ibn Abī Waqqāṣ ﷺ that the Prophet ﷺ said:

«لَا تَزَالُ طَائِفَةٌ مِنْ أُمَّتِي عَلَى الْحَقِّ ظَاهِرِينَ، لَا يَضُرُّهُمْ مَنْ خَذَلَهُمْ وَلَا مَنْ خَالَفَهُمْ، حَتَّى يَأْتِيَ أَمْرُ اللَّهِ وَهُمْ عَلَى ذَلِكَ».

«A group from my Ummah will remain manifest upon the truth, unharmed by those who abandon or oppose them, until the command of Allāh comes while they are upon that.»⁽¹⁾

Imām Aḥmad narrated from Mu‘āwiyah ibn Abī Sufyān ﷺ that the Prophet ﷺ said:

«...وَإِنَّ هَذِهِ الْأُمَّةَ سَتَقِفَرُ عَلَى ثَلَاثِ وَسَبْعِينَ مِלَّةً -يَعْنِي: الْأَهْوَاءَ-، كُلُّهَا فِي النَّارِ إِلَّا وَاحِدَةً، وَهِيَ الْجَمَاعَةُ».

⁽¹⁾ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim (170), (173), (174) & (247).

«Indeed, this Ummah will divide into seventy-three sects—meaning sectarian inclinations—all of them in the Fire except one: **al-Jamā‘ah** (the united group).»⁽¹⁾

These seventy-two sects are all within Islām but are misguided and deserving of divine threat. However, they are not consigned to eternal punishment, as Allāh ﷻ says:

﴿إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَأْكُلُونَ أَمْوَالَ الْيَتَامَىٰ ظُلْمًا إِنَّمَا يَأْكُلُونَ فِي بُطُونِهِمْ نَارًا وَسَيَصْلَوْنَ سَعِيرًا ۖ﴾

Indeed, those who unjustly consume orphans' wealth "in fact" consume nothing but fire into their bellies. And they will be burned in a blazing Hell. ○⁽²⁾

This principle was affirmed by ash-Shāṭibī al-Mālikī in “*al-I‘tiṣām*” and al-Khaṭṭābī in “*Ma‘ālim as-Sunan*”—even though both were influenced by Ash‘arism, albeit not to the extent of ar-Rāzī or al-Juwaynī. It is therefore essential to strive to identify the saved sect, follow its path in creed and method, and recognize the reason why other sects deviated from the Sunnah into innovation.

Aḥmad and al-Nasā‘ī in “*al-Kubrā*” narrated from Ibn Mas‘ūd ؓ that the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ once drew a straight line and said:

⁽¹⁾ Narrated by Aḥmed (16937), and Abū Dāwūd (4597).

⁽²⁾ [An-Nisā’ 4:10].

«هَذَا سَبِيلُ اللَّهِ مُسْتَقِيمًا».

«This is the path of Allāh—straight.»

Then he ﷺ drew lines to its right and left and said:

«هَذِهِ السُّبُلُ، لَيْسَ مِنْهَا سَبِيلٌ إِلَّا عَلَيْهِ شَيْطَانٌ يَدْعُو إِلَيْهِ».

«These are the other paths, and there is no path among them except that a devil calls to it.»

Then the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ recited:

﴿وَأَنَّ هَذَا صِرَاطِي مُسْتَقِيمًا فَاتَّبِعُوهُ وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا السُّبُلَ﴾

«Indeed, that is My Path—perfectly straight. So follow it and do not follow other ways.»⁽¹⁾⁽²⁾

Ibn Jarīr in his “*Tafsīr*”⁽³⁾ and Ibn Abī Ḥātim in his “*Tafsīr*”⁽⁴⁾ narrated from Mujāhid that these “**paths**” refer to **shubuhāt** (specious doubts) and **bida‘** (innovations). This clarifies that the cause for deviation from the saved sect into the deviant sects is **bid‘ah** (innovation).

This is further reinforced by the well-known **ḥadīth** narrated by four of the five major compilers (excluding an-Nasā’ī), from al-‘Irbāḍ ibn Sāriyah ؓ, in which the Prophet ﷺ said:

⁽¹⁾ [Al-An‘ām 6:153].

⁽²⁾ Narrated by Aḥmed in al-Musnad (4142), and an-Nasā’ī in al-Kubrā (11109).

⁽³⁾ Tafsīr aṭ-Ṭabarī (9/670).

⁽⁴⁾ Tafsīr Ibn Abī Ḥātim (8104).

«...فَإِنَّهُ مَنْ يَعِشْ مِنْكُمْ بَعْدِي فَسَيَرَى اخْتِلَافًا كَثِيرًا،
فَعَلَيْكُمْ بِسُنَّتِي وَسُنَّةِ الْخُلَفَاءِ الْمَهْدِيِّينَ الرَّاشِدِينَ، تَمَسَّكُوا
بِهَا وَعَضُوا عَلَيْهَا بِالنَّوَاجِدِ، وَإِيَّاكُمْ وَمُحَدَّثَاتِ الْأُمُورِ، فَإِنَّ
كُلَّ مُحَدَّثَةٍ بِدْعَةٌ، وَكُلَّ بِدْعَةٍ ضَلَالَةٌ».

«Whoever of you lives after me will see much differing. So hold fast to my Sunnah and the Sunnah of the Rightly-Guided Caliphs after me. Cling to it with your molar teeth. And beware of newly introduced matters, for every innovation is misguidance.»⁽¹⁾

This **ḥadīth** definitively shows that **bid'ah** (innovation) is the root cause for deviation from the saved sect to the misguided sects.

Second Preliminary: Salvation Lies in the Methodology of the Salaf

The greatest path to salvation is understanding the Qur'ān and Sunnah according to the understanding of **as-Salaf aṣ-Ṣāliḥ** (the righteous predecessors).

Allāh ﷻ says:

﴿وَالسَّابِقُونَ الْأَوَّلُونَ مِنَ الْمُهَاجِرِينَ وَالْأَنْصَارِ وَالَّذِينَ
اتَّبَعُوهُمْ بِإِحْسَانٍ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ وَرَضُوا عَنْهُ وَأَعَدَّ لَهُمْ

⁽¹⁾ Musnad Aḥmed (17142), Abū Dāwūd (4607), at-Tirmidhī (2676), and Ibn Mājah (43).

جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا أَبَدًا ذَلِكَ الْفَوْزُ
الْعَظِيمُ ﴿١٠٠﴾

{ As for the foremost—the first of the Muhājirīn (Emigrants) and the Anṣār (Helpers)—and those who follow them in goodness, Allāh is pleased with them and they are pleased with Him. And He has prepared for them Gardens under which rivers flow, to stay there for ever and ever. That is the ultimate triumph. ﴿١٠٠﴾⁽¹⁾

Also, Allāh ﷻ says:

﴿ فَإِنْ ءَامَنُوا بِمِثْلِ مَا ءَامَنَ بِهِ فَقَدْ أَهْتَدُوا ﴾

{ So if they believe in what you believe, then they will indeed be ⁽²⁾‘rightly’ guided. }⁽²⁾

The implication is clear: whoever does not believe as the Companions believed has deviated from the truth.

Moreover, Allāh ﷻ says:

﴿ يَأَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَكُونُوا مَعَ
الصَّٰدِقِينَ ﴾ ﴿١١٩﴾

⁽¹⁾ [At-Tawbah 9:100].

⁽²⁾ [Al-Baqarah 2:137].

{ *O believers! Be mindful of Allāh and be with the truthful.* ﴿١﴾⁽¹⁾

The foremost of the truthful are the Companions and those who follow their path.

Furthermore, Allāh ﷻ warns:

{ *وَمَنْ يُشَاقِقِ الرَّسُولَ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا تَبَيَّنَ لَهُ الْهُدَىٰ وَيَتَّبِعْ غَيْرَ سَبِيلِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ نُوَلِّهِ مَا تَوَلَّىٰ وَنُصْلِهِ جَهَنَّمَ ۚ وَسَاءَتْ مَصِيرًا* ﴿١١٥﴾

{ *And whoever defies the Messenger after guidance has become clear to them and follows a path other than that of the believers, We will let them pursue what they have chosen, then burn them in Hell—what an evil end!* ﴿١١٥﴾⁽²⁾

Thus, anyone who deviates from the way of the believers—the path of the **Salaf**—is promised this dire punishment.

The understanding of the **Salaf** is the safeguard of the religion. Many who claim Islām say, “**We derive evidence from the Qur’ān and Sunnah,**” yet the real dispute lies in their interpretation. If everyone interprets scripture according to their own personal whims, how can a correct understanding be ensured?

⁽¹⁾ [At-Tawbah 9:119].

⁽²⁾ [An-Nisā’ 4:115].

The solution is to block the path of distortion by obliging ourselves—and all Muslims—to adhere to the command of Allāh ﷻ and His Messenger ﷺ: to understand the Qur’ān and Sunnah strictly according to the methodology of **as-Salaf as-Ṣāliḥ** (the righteous predecessors).

Third Preliminary: Disputed Matters Are of Two Types

It should be known that disputed matters fall into two categories:

First Type: Permissible Disagreement

These are matters in which differing views are valid. The one who is correct receives two rewards, while the one who errs receives one. Such disagreements are not to be treated harshly.

The defining criterion of this category is that the issue is one over which the early generations of this Ummah held differing views—such as many jurisprudential matters, including whether touching the private part nullifies *wuḍū’* (ablution), or whether *jalsat al-istirāḥah* (the sitting of rest in prayer) is obligatory.

These are referred to as *ijtihādī* (discretionary) matters.

Second Type: Impermissible Disagreement

In these matters, only one opinion is correct and binding, and the truth is singular. These are primarily issues of *‘aqīdah* (creed) and many well-established rulings in *fiqh* (jurisprudence) wherein *ijmā‘* (consensus) exists.

It is authentically reported from Imām aḥ-Shāfi‘ī that he said:

*“My ruling regarding **ahl al-kalām** (the people of theological rhetoric) is that they should be beaten with palm branches and sandals, paraded among the tribes and clans, and it should be announced: ‘This is the punishment of those who turned to **kalām** and abandoned the Qur’ān and Sunnah.’”⁽¹⁾*

Why was Imām aḥ-Shāfi‘ī so severe? Because engaging in **‘ilm al-kalām** (speculative theology) is a **bid‘ah** (innovation), and disagreement in such matters is impermissible.

In fact, an-Nawawī and Ibn aṣ-Ṣalāḥ reported **ijmā‘** (consensus) on the prohibition of studying **‘ilm al-mantiq** (formal logic)—which is a branch of **kalām**—so how much more so its core and foundation? The scholars of **Ahl as-Sunnah** have unanimously condemned **‘ilm al-kalām** (speculative theology).

It is from within this very condemned methodology that the Ash‘arites adopted their core theological arguments—such as **ḥudūth al-ajsām** (the temporal origination of bodies), **a‘rāḍ** (accidents), and discourse concerning **jawhar** and **‘araḍ** (substance and accident).

Thus, it is essential to distinguish between **ijtihādī** matters—where disagreement is valid—and **khilāfī** matters—where it is not. Not all disagreements are of the same degree. Shaykh al-Islām Ibn Taymiyyah

⁽¹⁾ Jāmi‘ Bayān al-‘Ilm wa Faḍlih (2/941) No. (1794).

summarized this principle in “*Bayān ad-Dalīl fī Buṭlān at-Taḥlīl*,” as cited by Ibn Muflīḥ in “*al-Ādāb ash-Shar‘iyyah*.” Likewise, Abū al-Muẓaffar as-Sam‘ānī alluded to it in “*al-Qawāṭi‘*,” as did an-Nawawī in his “*Commentary on Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*.”

Fourth Preliminary: The Correct Creed Is Ancient, Not Invented

The sound creed is an ancient creed—established with the revelation of the Qur’ān and divine inspiration to the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ—and it is the creed upon which the Companions and those who followed them in excellence were upon.

It is not a creed exclusive to Imām Aḥmad, nor Ibn Taymiyyah, nor Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb. If any of them had introduced a new theological belief, it would have been summarily rejected.

It is not a later creed like that attributed to Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ash‘arī, nor like the beliefs of Wāṣil ibn ‘Aṭā’ (founder of the Mu‘tazilah), or of al-Ja‘d ibn Dirham and his student Jahm ibn Ṣafwān (founders of the Jahmiyyah). Rather, it is the original creed revealed by Allāh from the beginning of the Prophetic message.

The reason this must be emphasized is that some people assume the beliefs promoted by Imām Aḥmad, Ibn Taymiyyah, or Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb were novel doctrines innovated by them. In truth, this is an ancient creed. All of these scholars are bound by the authority of what the earliest generations—the Companions and those who followed them in excellence—were upon, as well as by the

evidences found in the Qur’ān and the Sunnah, understood according to the methodology of the **Salaf** of this Ummah.

Fifth Preliminary: The Creed of Ahl as-Sunnah Regarding Allāh’s Names and Attributes

The summary of **Ahl as-Sunnah’s** creed regarding the reality of Allāh’s Names and Attributes is that they affirm for each Attribute both a *ma’nā* (meaning) and a *kayfiyyah* (modality).

For example, Allāh ﷻ says:

{ لَيْسَ كَمِثْلِهِ شَيْءٌ وَهُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْبَصِيرُ ﴿١١﴾ }

{ *There is nothing like Him, for He ‘alone’ is the All-Hearing, All-Seeing.* ○ }⁽¹⁾

Ahl as-Sunnah affirm for Allāh the Attributes of All-Hearing and All-Seeing, and they affirm for these Attributes both a *ma’nā* (meaning) and a specific *kayfiyyah* (modality).

As for the *ma’nā* (meaning), it is known by returning to the Arabic language, for we have been addressed in a clear Arabic tongue. In the Arabic language, “*sam*” (hearing) is the perception of audible sounds, and “*baṣar*” (sight) is the perception of visible things.

As for the *kayfiyyah*—the specific manner or modality—of Allāh’s Hearing and Seeing, **that is knowledge which Allāh has exclusively reserved for Himself, and we are ignorant of it.** Yet our ignorance

⁽¹⁾ [Ash-Shūrā 42:11].

of the **kayfiyyah** (modality) does not warrant its denial; instead, we affirm it despite our ignorance of its reality.

To illustrate: if something were in my hand but unseen by you, your inability to perceive it would not negate its existence. Similarly, the **kayfiyyah** (modality) of Allāh’s Attributes is affirmed even though we do not grasp it.

It is authentically reported by al-Bayhaqī and others that Abū ‘Abd ar-Raḥmān Rabī‘ah ar-Ra’y was asked about the statement of Allāh ﷻ:

﴿ الرَّحْمَنُ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ اسْتَوَى ﴾

﴿ *Ar-Raḥmān Istawà (Rose Over) the Throne.* ○ ⁽¹⁾ ﴾

He replied:

“The ‘how’ is unknown, the Istiwā’ (Raising Over) is inconceivable, and belief in Allāh’s Istiwā’ (Raising Over) is obligatory upon you and me.” ⁽²⁾

His statement “**the ‘how’ is unknown**” refers to the unknown modality—not that the word has no meaning.

His student, the Imām of Dār al-Hijrah, Imām Mālik, responded in a similar manner—as reported by al-Bayhaqī in his book

⁽¹⁾ [Ṭā-Hā 20:5].

⁽²⁾ Al-Bayhaqī, Al-Asmā’ waṣ-Ṣifāt (2/306), No. (868).

“al-Asmā’ waṣ-Ṣifāt,” al-Khallāl, and others. When asked about the statement of Allāh ﷻ:

﴿الرَّحْمَنُ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ اسْتَوَى﴾

{ *Ar-Raḥmān Istawā (Rose Over) the Throne.* ○ }⁽¹⁾

He responded:

*“[The meaning of] Istiwā’ is not unknown, the ‘how’ is incomprehensible, belief in it is obligatory, and asking about it is a **bid‘ah** (an innovation).”*⁽²⁾

Scholars unanimously agreed upon Imām Mālik’s response, as clarified by Shaykh al-Islām Ibn Taymiyyah ﷺ. From this, we understand that the **Salaf** (early scholars) were neither **mu’awwilah** (those who engaged in **ta’wīl**—allegorical reinterpretation that constitutes distortion) nor **mufawwiḍah** (practitioners of **tafwīḍ**—those who engage in the disavowal of meaning regarding the Attributes), but rather adhered to the approach outlined above.

Among the examples of **ta’wīl** (allegorical reinterpretation that constitutes distortion), as previously discussed, is the case of **as-Sam‘** (Hearing), which—by its linguistic definition—means the perception of audible sounds. Yet those who engage in **ta’wīl**, such as the Mu‘tazilah and Jahmiyyah, distort this meaning and reduce it to mere

⁽¹⁾ [Tā-Hā 20:5].

⁽²⁾ Al-Bayhaqī, Al-Asmā’ waṣ-Ṣifāt (2/305), No. (867).

‘ilm (knowledge). Likewise, the term **Yad** (Hand) in the Arabic language refers to that by which one grasps, seizes, and the like; however, the **mu’awwilah** (those who engaged in **ta’wīl**—allegorical reinterpretation that constitutes distortion) reinterpret it to mean **qudrah** (Ability).

In contrast, **Ahl as-Sunnah** affirm the established linguistic meanings of these Attributes—such as “**Hand**”—as understood in Arabic, while at the same time asserting that the **kayfiyyah** (modality) is unknown and beyond human comprehension. Thus, they unite between **ithbāt** (affirmation) without **tashbīh** (likening Allāh to His creation—anthropomorphism), and **tanzīh** (declaring Allāh’s absolute freedom from any likeness to creation, and from every defect or deficiency) without **ta‘tīl** (denial), just as Allāh ﷻ says:

﴿لَيْسَ كَمِثْلِهِ شَيْءٌ﴾

﴿*There is nothing like Him.*﴾⁽¹⁾

—this is the negation of **tashbīh** (likening Allāh to His creation—anthropomorphism); while:

﴿وَهُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْبَصِيرُ﴾

﴿*For He ʿaloneʼ is the All-Hearing, All-Seeing.*﴾⁽²⁾

—is the affirmation.

⁽¹⁾ [Ash-Shūrā 42:11].

⁽²⁾ [Ash-Shūrā 42:11].

Refuting the
Mufawwiḍah

As for the *mufawwiḍah* (practitioners of *tafwīḍ*—those who engage in the disavowal of meaning regarding the Attributes), they are essentially *lā-adriyah* (agnostics). Though they claim to affirm Attributes such as the **Two Hands** and **Hearing**, they assert, “**We do not know their meaning.**”

To them, these Attributes are entirely unknowable in meaning—akin to the disjointed letters of the Arabic alphabet.

This, in fact, falls under *ta’wīl* (allegorical reinterpretation that constitutes distortion) disguised as pious ignorance.

At-tafwīḍ is among the most deviant and dangerous approaches in this matter. The necessary implication of this view is that the Prophets and Messengers themselves were unaware of the most exalted and central content of the Book of Allāh—namely, His Names and Attributes.

How, then, could Allāh make His Book a source of guidance, yet render its most magnificent and fundamental subject—His Names and Attributes—unknowable? And how could He command us to reflect deeply upon His Book, saying:

﴿ كَتَبَ أَنْزَلْنَاهُ إِلَيْكَ مُبَارَكٌ لِيَدَّبَّرُوا ءَايَاتِهِ وَلِيَسْتَدَكِّرَ أَقْلُوا
الْأَلْبَابِ ﴾

{*‘This is’ a blessed Book which We have revealed to you
‘O Prophet’ so that they may contemplate its āyāt
(verses), and people of reason may be mindful.* ○ }⁽¹⁾

—while we remain ignorant of its most crucial contents?!

Ash‘arite
Errors
Regarding the
Salaf’s
Grasping of
Divine
Attributes

Among the doctrinal deviations of the Ash‘arites is their claim that there are two methodological approaches to the divine Attributes: **the first** is the approach of the **Khalaf** (later scholars), which they regard as more precise and epistemically superior—namely, **ta’wīl** (allegorical reinterpretation that constitutes distortion); **the second** is the approach of the **Salaf** (early generations), which they deem safer but epistemically deficient—consisting of affirming the Attributes without comprehending their meaning. In doing so, they ascribe ignorance to the **Salaf** and falsely attribute to them the doctrine of **tafwīḍ** (declaring the meanings of the Attributes unknowable—disavowal of meaning). In contrast, the **Salaf** are entirely free from such a view.

The very **Salaf** whom we are commanded to follow are those whom the Ash‘arites accuse of ignorance, while attributing knowledge and virtue to the later scholars. Yet Allāh condemned those among the Jews who were ignorant, saying:

{*وَمِنْهُمْ أُمِّيُونَ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ الْكِتَابَ إِلَّا أَمَانٍ وَإِنَّهُمْ إِلَّا
يُظُنُّونَ* ○ }

⁽¹⁾ [ṣād 38:29].

{ *And among them are the illiterate who know nothing about the Scripture except lies, and ʿsoʿ they ʿwishfullyʿ speculate.* ○ }⁽¹⁾

These [Ash‘arites] seek to liken our **Salaf** to those blameworthy and ignorant Jews.

The truth is that the **Salaf** were not *mufawwiḍah* (practitioners of *tafwīḍ*—those who engage in the disavowal of meaning regarding the Attributes). Also, *taʿwīl* (allegorical reinterpretation that constitutes distortion) is neither true knowledge nor praiseworthy; rather, as previously established, it is a blameworthy deviation.



⁽¹⁾ [Al-Baqarah 2:78].

The Fundamental Elements of the Ash‘arite Creed

First Element: The Source of Religious Authority According to the Ash‘arites

The Ash‘arites do not consider non-*mutawātīr* (mass-transmitted) Prophetic Sunnah to be authoritative in matters of creed. In their view, *ahād* reports (singularly transmitted narrations) do not constitute valid evidence in *‘aqīdah* (creed); thus, they restrict belief to the Qur’ān and only the *mutawātīr* (mass-transmitted) Sunnah.

However, the division of the Sunnah into *mutawātīr* and *āhād* according to the methodology of the *mutakallimūn* (speculative theologians) warrants serious scrutiny. If this classification were to be rigorously examined, one would scarcely find a single *ḥadīth* that truly meets the criteria for *mutawātīr* as defined by the *mutakallimūn*.

Ibn Ḥibbān acknowledged this in the introduction to his “*Ṣaḥīḥ*,” as did the legal theorist Ibn al-Najjār in his work “*Sharḥ al-Kawkab*.” Similarly, Ibn Ḥajar reported in “*Nuzhat an-Nazar*” that Ibn aṣ-Ṣalāḥ said:

*“Except if one were to claim that the **ḥadīth** ‘Whoever lies upon me deliberately...’ is **mutawātīr**.”⁽¹⁾*

That is: **claim** it—not affirm it definitively.

⁽¹⁾ Mukhtaṣar at-Taḥrīr *Sharḥ al-Kawkab al-Munīr* (2/329-330), *Nuzhat an-Nazar* (p. 47) – No. (198), and See Muqaddimat Ibn aṣ-Ṣalāḥ (p. 372).

This approach of rejecting the Prophetic Sunnah is extremely perilous. What is astonishing is that many Ash‘arites affiliate themselves with the Shāfi‘ī school. At the same time, Imām ash-Shāfi‘ī, in his seminal work “*al-Risālah*,” extensively affirmed the authoritative status of **ahād** reports—not only in practical juristic matters but also in matters of creed. He thoroughly articulated the evidences supporting this.

Yet they opposed this great Imām and adopted this misguided innovation: **the rejection of ahād reports in matters of creed.**

Ar-Rāzī states:

*“As for relying on **khābar al-āḥād** (solitary reports) in matters concerning knowledge of Allāh, that is impermissible.”⁽¹⁾*

Observe the Ash‘arite creed upheld by ar-Rāzī—how he explicitly rules out accepting **khābar al-āḥād** (solitary reports) in matters of creed. This is a grave error and a manifest deviation, amounting to a rejection of the revealed evidences from the **Sharī‘ah** (legislation).

Al-Bukhārī and Muslim narrated from Ibn ‘Abbās رضي الله عنه that the Prophet ﷺ sent Mu‘ādh to Yemen and said:

«إِنَّكَ تَأْتِي قَوْمًا أَهْلَ كِتَابٍ، فَلْيَكُنْ أَوَّلَ مَا تَدْعُوهُمْ إِلَيْهِ شَهَادَةُ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ».

⁽¹⁾ Asās at-Taqdīs (p. 168).

«You are going to a people of the Book, so let the first thing you call them to be the testimony that there is no deity worthy of worship but Allāh.»⁽¹⁾

The Prophet ﷺ thus dispatched Mu‘ādh رضي الله عنه to call them to **tawhīd** (monotheism—singling out Allāh in that which He alone deserves) and to the pillars of **īmān** and Islām. Though this was a **ḵabar āḥād** (solitary transmission), the Prophet ﷺ treated it as a sound basis for establishing the **ḥujjah** (authoritative proof) upon the people of Yemen.

Moreover, Allāh ﷻ says:

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا إِن جَاءَكُمْ فَاسِقٌ بِنَبَأٍ فَتَبَيَّنُوا﴾

{ O believers, if an evildoer brings you any news, verify it. }⁽²⁾

The **mafhūm al-mukhālafah** (inverse implication) is that if a trustworthy person brings a report, we accept it without requiring verification—even if conveyed by just one, two, or a handful of individuals—despite such reports being classified as **āḥād** (solitary, non-mass-transmitted reports).

⁽¹⁾ Al-Bukhārī (1458, 7372), Muslim (31).

⁽²⁾ [Al-Ḥujurāt 49:6].

Second Element: Prioritizing Reason Over Revelation

Among the most astonishing of matters is that a man may ascribe himself to Islām, yet hold such a belief. Suppose Allāh’s Messenger ﷺ were among us and said something, and we replied:

“O Messenger of Allāh, wait—let us first consult our intellects.”

Would any Muslim who believes in Allāh and the Last Day ever say such a thing?

Indeed, Allāh ﷻ says:

﴿ فَلَا وَرَبِّكَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ حَتَّىٰ يُحَكِّمُوكَ فِيمَا شَجَرَ بَيْنَهُمْ
ثُمَّ لَا يَجِدُوا فِي أَنفُسِهِمْ حَرَجًا مِّمَّا قَضَيْتَ وَيُسَلِّمُوا
تَسْلِيمًا ﴾

{ But no! By your Lord, they will never be ¹“true” believers until they accept you ¹“O Prophet” as the judge in their disputes, and find no resistance within themselves against your decision and submit wholeheartedly. ○ }⁽¹⁾

Al-Juwaynī, in his work “*al-Irshād*” (p. 359), asserts the prioritization of reason over revelation—a stance further expounded upon by ar-Rāzī in his “*Asās at-Taqdīs*,” wherein he presents lengthy, unfounded

⁽¹⁾ [An-Nisā’ 4:65].

arguments in favor of reason’s precedence, referring to it as “*al-qānūn al-kullī*” (the universal principle). However, this is a feeble and incoherent claim, devoid of any scholarly merit.

Then, which “**reason**” do the Ash‘arites refer to? Human intellects differ—what one deems good today, he may deem reprehensible tomorrow. Given such inconsistency, how can reason be taken as a binding authority and reference point in the religion of Allāh, when it is inherently weak, contradictory, and unstable?

Allāh ﷻ says:

﴿ أَفَلَا يَتَذَكَّرُونَ الْقُرْآنَ وَلَوْ كَانَ مِنْ عِنْدِ غَيْرِ اللَّهِ لَوَجَدُوا فِيهِ اخْتِلَافًا كَثِيرًا ﴾⁽¹⁾

﴿ *Do they not then reflect on the Qur’ān? Had it been from anyone other than Allāh, they would have certainly found in it many inconsistencies.* ﴾⁽¹⁾

I have expanded upon the refutation of this so-called “*al-qānūn al-kullī*” (universal principle) in my “*Commentary on al-Wāsiṭiyyah*” for those seeking further detail.

⁽¹⁾ [An-Nisā’ 4:82].

Third Element: Distorting the Texts of Divine Attributes Out of Fear of *Tashbīh* (Anthropomorphism)

The Ash‘arites claim that the apparent meaning of the Book of Allāh calls to *tashbīh* (likening Allāh to His creation—anthropomorphism)! Some of them even went so far as to say:

*“The apparent meaning of the Book of Allāh is **kufr** (disbelief), for it leads to **tashbīh** (likening Allāh to His creation—anthropomorphism)!”⁽¹⁾*

We seek refuge in Allāh!

As-Sanūsī states:

*“As for those who claim that the path to knowing the truth begins with the Book and the Sunnah while prohibiting recourse to anything beyond them, the refutation is that their **ḥujjiyyah** (evidentiary value) is only known through **nazar ‘aqlī** (rational inquiry). Moreover, both—the Qur‘ān and the Sunnah—contain **ṣawāhir** (apparent meanings) which, if believed in according to their outward sense, would constitute **kufr** (disbelief) or **bid‘ah** (innovation) according to many scholars.”⁽²⁾*

⁽¹⁾ Asās at-Taqdīs (p. 168).

⁽²⁾ *Sharḥ ‘Aqīdat Ahl at-Tawḥīd al-Kubrā* (p. 502).

Lā ilāha illā Allāh!

The **ẓawāhir** (apparent meanings) of the Qur’ān and Sunnah are considered **kufṛ** (disbelief) and **bid‘ah** (innovation) according to one of the leading figures of the Ash‘arites—as-Sanūsī!

He, as-Sanūsī, further says:

“The foundations of disbelief are six.”

—then enumerates five, and continues:

*“**Sixth:** Adhering to the foundational matters of creed based solely on the apparent meanings of the Book and the Sunnah, without presenting them before rational proofs and definitive scriptural evidences...”*

Thus, he regarded adherence to the **ẓawāhir** (apparent meanings) of the Qur’ān and Sunnah as one of the very roots of disbelief!

By Allāh, had I not read this myself, I would not have believed that a Muslim could even conceive such a notion—let alone articulate it—declaring the apparent meanings of the Book and the Sunnah to be disbelief!

We seek refuge in Allāh!

These are the Ash‘arites. They present a feeble, absurd, and baseless argument, claiming:

“We cannot understand the Book and the Sunnah except through ‘aql (reason); thus, reason must be the foundation.”

It is said in response: Certainly not. **The foundation is the Book and the Sunnah.** This is made clear by the fact that when a person is first born, his intellect contains nothing—it is like an empty vessel. He begins to discern religious matters by acquiring knowledge from the Book and the Sunnah, and only then does he develop the ability to distinguish between truth and falsehood.

So which, then, is the foundation: the intellect that began as an empty vessel—or the revealed guidance of the Book and Sunnah that filled it? **The foundation is revelation.**

This is among the many responses offered by Ibn Taymiyyah رحمہ اللہ in “*Dar’ Ta‘āruḍ al-‘Aql wa an-Naql*” against the so-called “*al-qānūn al-kullī*” (universal principle) articulated by ar-Rāzī. For those seeking further elaboration, refer to the “*Commentary on al-Wāsiṭiyyah*.”

Fourth Element: A Summary of the Ash‘arite Creed

The Ash‘arites have strayed with manifest misguidance in creed and have deviated significantly from the Straight Path in numerous major issues of belief.

The following are select examples:

First Issue: The Ash‘arite Restriction of *īmān* (Faith) to Mere *Taṣdīq* (Mental Affirmation)

The Ash‘arites hold that *īmān* (faith) is limited to *taṣdīq* (mental affirmation), and that bodily actions are not part of faith. This view was affirmed by al-Juwaynī⁽¹⁾ and Sa‘d ad-Dīn at-Taftāzānī⁽²⁾.

This is a clear rejection of the Qur’ān and the Sunnah. How can it be claimed that bodily actions are not part of *īmān* (faith), when Allāh ﷻ says:

﴿وَمَا كَانَ اللَّهُ لِيُضِيعَ إِيمَنَكُمْ﴾

﴿And Allāh would never cause your *īmān* to be lost.﴾⁽³⁾

The context of the *āyah* (verse) is in reference to *ṣalāh* (prayer), which Allāh Himself called ﴿*īmān*﴾. Imām an-Nawawī said in his “Commentary on *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*”:

“What is meant by ﴿your *īmān*﴾ in this *āyah* (verse) is *ṣalāh*—
by consensus of the scholars.”

And how can it be claimed that deeds are not part of *īmān* (faith), when Allāh ﷻ says:

⁽¹⁾ Al-Irshād (p. 398).

⁽²⁾ *Sharḥ an-Nasafiyyah* (p. 428).

⁽³⁾ [Al-Baqarah 2:143].

﴿ وَمَا أُمِرُوا إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ مُخْلِصِينَ لَهُ الدِّينَ حَقَّاءَ وَيُقِيمُوا
الصَّلَاةَ وَيُؤْتُوا الزَّكَاةَ وَذَلِكَ دِينُ الْقَيِّمَةِ ۝ ﴾

{ And they were not commanded except to worship Allāh, ¹being sincere to Him in religion, upright, and to establish prayer and give zakāh. That is the upright religion. ○ }⁽¹⁾

In this *āyah* (verse), *ṣalāh* (prayer) and *zakāh* (almsgiving) are explicitly named as part of the *dīn* (religion)—thereby affirming that righteous actions are integral to faith.

And how can it be claimed that deeds are not part of *īmān* (faith), when it is authentically reported in “*Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*” and “*Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*”—with the wording here from Muslim—that Abū Hurayrah رضي الله عنه narrated the Prophet ﷺ said:

«الْإِيمَانُ بِضْعٌ وَسَبْعُونَ - أَوْ بِضْعٌ وَسِتُّونَ - شُعْبَةً، فَأَفْضَلُهَا
قَوْلُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ، وَأَدْنَاهَا إِمَاطَةُ الْأَذَى عَنِ الطَّرِيقِ، وَالْحَيَاءُ
شُعْبَةٌ مِنَ الْإِيمَانِ».

«*Īmān* consists of over seventy branches—or over sixty. The most virtuous of them is the statement “*Lā ilāha illā Allāh*” (There is no deity worthy of worship but Allāh), and the lowest of them is

⁽¹⁾ [Al-Bayyinah 98:5].

removing harm from the path. And modesty is a branch of *īmān*.»⁽¹⁾

Here, the Prophet ﷺ explicitly declared that **speech**—namely the utterance *Lā ilāha illā Allāh*—is part of *īmān* (faith), and likewise **action**—such as removing harm from the path—is also part of *īmān* (faith). So how can it be claimed that *īmān* is nothing more than *taṣdīq* (mental affirmation)?!

Second Issue: The Ash‘arites are Determinists in the Matter of Divine Decree

The Ash‘arites, in the matter of *qadar* (divine decree), adopt the stance of the Jabriyyah, asserting that the human being is compelled—like a feather tossed by the wind. In this, they align with the Jahmiyyah: at times agreeing with them, and at other times siding with the Mu‘tazilah in substance—though they obscure their position with ambiguous expressions.

They say, for instance:

*“We seek refuge in Allāh from the doctrine of **jabr** (compulsion) as held by the Jahmiyyah.”*

⁽¹⁾ Al-Bukhārī (9), Muslim (57, 58).

But when asked:

*“What is your creed regarding **qadar** (divine decree)?”*

—they respond:

*“Our doctrine is **kasb** (acquisition).”*

Yet when pressed further:

*“Then explain **kasb** (acquisition) to us.”*

—they produce a long-winded and convoluted explanation, the conclusion of which amounts, in reality, to the very notion of **jabr** (compulsion): **that the servant has no true volition.**

In truth, the Ash‘arites deny that the servant possesses any true ability. No matter how they attempt to formulate their doctrine of **kasb** (acquisition), it invariably leads to the conclusion that the human being has no will of his own and is, in reality, compelled. This was explicitly affirmed by al-Juwaynī⁽¹⁾, al-Bājjūrī⁽²⁾, and ‘Aḍud ad-Dīn al-Ījī⁽³⁾.

⁽¹⁾ Al-Irshād (p. 219).

⁽²⁾ Sharḥ Jawharat at-Tawḥīd (p. 197).

⁽³⁾ Al-Mawāqif fī ‘ilm al-Kalām (p. 324).

Third Issue: The Ash‘arites Deny Allāh’s Highness Above His Creation

The Ash‘arites do not affirm ‘*Ulūw adh-Dhāt*’ (that Allāh is above in His Essence—above His creation, over the Throne, in a manner befitting His Majesty), but instead say:

“Allāh is neither within the world nor outside of it, neither connected to it nor separate from it.”

—statements of philosophical sophistry that are devoid of meaning.

Yet the Qur’ān is replete with *āyāt* (verses) affirming that Allāh ﷻ is above His creation, such as the saying of Allāh ﷻ:

﴿ ءَأَمِنْتُمْ مَّنْ فِي السَّمَاءِ أَن يَخْسِفَ بِكُمُ الْأَرْضَ فَإِذَا هِيَ تَمُورُ ۝١٦ ﴾

{ Do you feel secure that He who is above would not cause the earth to swallow you and suddenly it would sway? ﴿ ۝١٦ ﴾⁽¹⁾

Some of the ignorant among the Ash‘arites claimed that the one referred to by “*man*” (who) in this *āyah* (verse) is **the bird!**

It is said to them: **Fear Allāh!**

⁽¹⁾ [Al-Mulk 67:16].

Firstly, the bird is not an ‘*āqil*’ (rational being)⁽¹⁾, and in the Arabic language, non-rational entities are referred to with “*mā*” (what), not “*man*” (who).

Secondly, can a bird cause the earth to swallow you?!

As for Allāh’s statement:

﴿ فِي السَّمَاءِ ﴾

﴿ *In the heaven* ﴾⁽²⁾

—it means: ﴿ *Above the heaven* ﴾—just as He ﷻ says elsewhere :

﴿ قُلْ سِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ ﴾

﴿ *Say: ‘Travel in the earth.’* ﴾⁽³⁾

—that is, ﴿ *over* ﴾ or ﴿ *across the surface of the earth* ﴾—**not within its depths.**

Moreover, Allāh ﷻ says:

﴿ إِلَيْهِ يَصْعَدُ الْكَلِمُ الطَّيِّبُ وَالْعَمَلُ الصَّالِحُ يَرْفَعُهُ ﴾

⁽¹⁾ And as some have phrased it: “*ghayr ‘āqil*” (non-intelligent). However, the expression “*ghayr ‘ālim*” (non-knowing) is more precise, as clarified by al-Bayḍāwī, al-‘Allā’ī, and others—because “*man*” (who) is used in reference to Allāh, and it is not appropriate to describe Allāh, Exalted is He, as ‘*āqil*’ (rational being).

⁽²⁾ [Al-Mulk 67:16].

⁽³⁾ [Al-An‘ām 6:11].

{ *To Him ʿaloneʼ good words ascend, and righteous deeds are raised up by Him.* }⁽¹⁾

He ﷺ also says:

{ *تَنْزِيلُ الْكِتَابِ مِنَ اللَّهِ الْعَزِيزِ الْحَكِيمِ* }

{ *The revelation of this Book is from Allāh—the Almighty, All-Wise.* }⁽²⁾

This clearly indicates that Allāh is in **al-‘Ulūw** (Highness), and that the Qurʾān was sent down from Him above. The evidences for Allāh’s ‘**Ulūw** (Highness) are abundant. Ibn al-Qayyim رحمه الله stated that the proofs affirming the ‘**Ulūw** (Highness) of Allāh exceed two thousand.

Adh-Dhahabī, a Shāfi‘ī scholar, authored a dedicated work affirming the ‘**Ulūw** (Highness) of Allāh—namely, his book “*al-‘Ulūw*.” Likewise, Ibn al-Qayyim, a Ḥanbalī scholar, composed a specific treatise establishing Allāh’s ‘**Ulūw** (Highness), titled “*Ijtimā‘ al-Juyūsh al-Islāmiyyah*.”

Both scholars marshaled extensive textual evidences and transmitted reports from the early **Salaf** in affirmation of Allāh’s ‘**Ulūw** (Highness) above His creation. Yet the Ash‘arites turned away from all of this with utter disregard.

⁽¹⁾ [Fāṭir 35:10].

⁽²⁾ [Az-Zumar 39:1].

Fourth Issue: The Ash‘arites Deny Wisdom and Purpose in Allāh’s Actions

The Ash‘arites do not affirm that Allāh’s actions possess *ḥikmah* (wisdom) or *‘illah* (underlying purpose), as has already been alluded to.

If someone were to say to you, “**Your actions have no wisdom behind them,**” by Allāh, one would naturally be outraged and respond, “**Do you perceive me to be one whose actions are devoid of wisdom?**” And you would indeed be justified in your anger.

Yet the Ash‘arites claim that Allāh’s actions have no wisdom behind them! This position was explicitly stated by al-Bāqillānī⁽¹⁾, and likewise reported by al-Āmidī⁽²⁾, al-Bājūrī⁽³⁾, and in the book “*‘Awn al-Marīd*”⁽⁴⁾.

Fifth Issue: The Ash‘arites Do Not Affirm Allāh’s Action-Based Attributes

The Ash‘arites do not affirm the *ṣifāt fi‘liyyah* (action-based Attributes) of Allāh. They deny attributes such as Anger, *al-Majī’* (Coming), Love, Pleasure, and many others from among the numerous action-based Attributes by which Allāh ﷻ has described Himself and by which His Messenger ﷺ has described Him. Their rationale for rejecting these attributes is their fear of *tashbīh* (likening Allāh to

⁽¹⁾ At-Tamhīd (p. 50).

⁽²⁾ Ghāyat al-Marām fī ‘Ilm al-Kalām (p. 224).

⁽³⁾ Sharḥ Jawharat at-Tawḥīd (p. 181).

⁽⁴⁾ ‘Awn al-Murīd li-Sharḥ Jawharat at-Tawḥīd (1/509).

creation—anthropomorphism); however, as has already been established, **affirming these attributes—as revealed—does not necessitate any resemblance whatsoever.**

This denial of Allāh’s action-based attributes has been explicitly affirmed by al-Juwaynī⁽¹⁾, ar-Rāzī⁽²⁾, and al-Bājūrī⁽³⁾, and is also recorded in the book “*‘Awn al-Murīd*”⁽⁴⁾.

Sixth Issue: The Ash‘arites Affirm Only Seven Attributes—And Reinterpret the Rest

The Ash‘arites affirm only seven of Allāh’s attributes, while reinterpreting the rest through *ta’wīl* (allegorical reinterpretation that constitutes distortion). This stance is noted in “*‘Awn al-Murīd*”⁽⁵⁾, and also affirmed by al-Bājūrī⁽⁶⁾, ar-Rāzī⁽⁷⁾, and al-Juwaynī⁽⁸⁾. As previously clarified, affirming Allāh’s attributes as revealed does not entail *tashbīh* (likening Him to creation—anthropomorphism).

Seventh Issue: The Ash‘arites Do Not Comprehend the True Meaning of the Declaration of Tawhīd—“*Lā ilāha illā Allāh*”

The Ash‘arites are ignorant of the true meaning of the statement of *tawhīd*: *Lā ilāha illā Allāh*—that majestic phrase concerning which the

⁽¹⁾ Al-Irshād (p. 156).

⁽²⁾ Asās at-Taqdīs (p. 103-107).

⁽³⁾ *Sharḥ Jawharat at-Tawḥīd* (p. 132).

⁽⁴⁾ *‘Awn al-Murīd li-Sharḥ Jawharat at-Tawḥīd* (1/104).

⁽⁵⁾ *‘Awn al-Murīd li-Sharḥ Jawharat at-Tawḥīd* (p. 405).

⁽⁶⁾ *Sharḥ Jawharat al-Tawḥīd* (p. 145).

⁽⁷⁾ Asās at-Taqdīs (p. 168).

⁽⁸⁾ Al-Irshād (p. 359).

Prophet ﷺ said, as authentically reported in “*aṣ-Ṣaḥīḥayn*” (“*Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*” and “*Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*”) from the *ḥadīth* of Ibn ‘Umar ﷺ:

«أَمَرْتُ أَنْ أَقَاتِلَ النَّاسَ حَتَّى يَشْهَدُوا أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ، وَأَنَّ مُحَمَّدًا رَسُولُ اللَّهِ، وَيُقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ، وَيُؤْتُوا الزَّكَاةَ، فَإِذَا فَعَلُوا ذَلِكَ عَصَمُوا مِنِّي دِمَاءَهُمْ وَأَمْوَالَهُمْ إِلَّا بِحَقِّ الْإِسْلَامِ، وَحِسَابُهُمْ عَلَى اللَّهِ».

«I have been commanded to fight the people until they testify that *Lā ilāha illā Allāh* (there is no deity worthy of worship but Allāh) and that Muḥammad is the Messenger of Allāh, establish the prayer, and give the *zakāh*. If they do so, their lives and wealth are protected from me—except by right of Islām—and their reckoning is with Allāh.»⁽¹⁾

Yet the Ash‘arites interpret *Lā ilāha illā Allāh* to mean:

*“There is no Creator but Allāh,
no Originator but Allāh,
and no Provider but Allāh.”*

In doing so, they reduce its meaning to *tawḥīd ar-rubūbiyyah* (affirming Allāh’s Lordship)—a belief even the idolaters of Quraysh affirmed!

⁽¹⁾ Al-Bukhārī (25), Muslim (32).

As Allāh ﷻ says:

﴿ وَلَئِنْ سَأَلْتَهُمْ مَنْ خَلَقَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ لَيَقُولَنَّ اللَّهُ ﴾

﴿ If you ask them ‘O Prophet’ who created the skies and the earth, they will certainly say, “Allāh!” ﴾⁽¹⁾

Whereas the correct meaning of *Lā ilāha illā Allāh* is: **There is no deity truly worthy of worship except Allāh—that none is to be worshipped besides Him, and thus no sacrifice, no vow, and no supplication is to be offered except to Him.**

It was precisely this meaning that the pagans of Quraysh rejected and for which they refused to utter the statement, saying:

﴿ أَجَعَلَ الْآلِهَةَ إِلَٰهًا وَحِدًا إِنَّ هَذَا لَشَيْءٌ عَجَبٌ ﴾

﴿ Has he reduced ‘all’ the gods to One God? Indeed, this is something totally astonishing. ○ ﴾⁽²⁾

Thus, they were idolaters in worship, as Allāh ﷻ said regarding them:

﴿ مَا نَعْبُدُهُمْ إِلَّا لِيُقَرِّبُونَا إِلَى اللَّهِ زُلْفَى ﴾

﴿ We worship them only so they may bring us closer to Allāh. ﴾⁽³⁾

⁽¹⁾ [Az-Zumar 39:38].

⁽²⁾ [Ṣād 38:5].

⁽³⁾ [Az-Zumar 39:3].

And He ﷻ also said:

﴿وَيَعْبُدُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ مَا لَا يَضُرُّهُمْ وَلَا يَنْفَعُهُمْ
وَيَقُولُونَ هَؤُلَاءِ شَفَعُونَا عِنْدَ اللَّهِ﴾

{ They worship besides Allāh others who can neither harm nor benefit them, and say, “These are our intercessors with Allāh.” }⁽¹⁾

Among the Ash‘arites who interpreted *Lā ilāha illā Allāh* as merely affirming ***tawḥīd al-rubūbiyyah*** (Allāh’s Lordship) were al-Bāqillānī and ‘Abd al-Qāhir al-Baghdādī⁽²⁾.

Eighth Issue: The Ash‘arites Claim That the Speech of Allāh Is Internal, Not Verbal

The Ash‘arites claim that the Speech of Allāh is ***nafsī*** (internal, subsisting within His Essence) and not ***lafẓī*** (verbal or uttered). They maintain that it is something inherent within Himself, after which Allāh created another entity by which we were enabled to hear His Speech. As a result, they assert that the Qur’ān we possess is merely an ***‘ibārah*** (expression) of the Speech of Allāh—not His actual Speech.

This view contradicts both divine revelation and sound intellect. How can it be said that the Qur’ān is not the Speech of Allāh, when Allāh ﷻ Himself says:

⁽¹⁾ [Yūnus 10:18].

⁽²⁾ Uṣūl ad-Dīn (p. 123).

﴿ وَإِنْ أَحَدٌ مِّنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ اسْتَجَارَكَ فَأَجِرْهُ حَتَّى يَسْمَعَ
كَلِمَ اللَّهِ ﴾

{ And if anyone from the polytheists asks for your protection ‘O Prophet’, grant it to them so they may hear the Speech of Allāh. }⁽¹⁾

And He ﷺ also says:

﴿ * أَفَتَطْمَعُونَ أَنْ يُؤْمِنُوا لَكُمْ وَقَدْ كَانَ فَرِيقٌ مِّنْهُمْ
يَسْمَعُونَ كَلِمَ اللَّهِ ﴾

{ Do you ‘believers still’ expect them to be true to you, though a group of them would hear the Speech of Allāh. }⁽²⁾

Here, Allāh clearly and explicitly refers to it as { *Speech* }.

How, then, can one claim that the Speech which is heard is not the actual Speech of Allāh, when Allāh ﷻ says:

﴿ وَكَلَّمَ اللَّهُ مُوسَى تَكْلِيمًا ﴾

{ And Allāh spoke to Mūsā with ‘real’ Speech. ○ }⁽³⁾

In this *āyah* (verse), the verb *kallama*—{ *spoke* }—is emphatically reinforced by the verbal noun *taklīm*—{ ‘real’ *Speech* }. And it is a

⁽¹⁾ [At-Tawbah 9:6].

⁽²⁾ [Al-Baqarah 2:75].

⁽³⁾ [An-Nisā’ 4:164].

well-established principle—by consensus—that when a verb is confirmed by its verbal noun, **it denotes a real and actual occurrence**. This has been affirmed by Ibn an-Naḥḥās and cited with approval by Ibn Ḥajar in his “*Fatḥ al-Bārī*”.

Furthermore, Allāh ﷻ says to Mūsā ﷺ:

﴿ وَأَنَا اخْتَرْتُكَ فَاسْتَمِعْ لِمَا يُوحَىٰ (١٣) ﴾

﴿ *I have chosen you, so listen to what is revealed.* ○ ⁽¹⁾ ﴾

How can Mūsā ﷺ be instructed to listen to what is revealed, if the Speech of Allāh is merely internal and was never uttered?

Likewise, Allāh ﷻ says:

﴿ وَنَادَاهُمَا رَبُّهُمَا أَلَمْ أَنْهَكُمَا عَنْ تِلْكَ الشَّجَرَةِ وَأَقُلْ لَكُمَا إِنَّ الشَّيْطَانَ لَكُمَا عَدُوٌّ مُّبِينٌ (١٢) ﴾

﴿ *Then their Lord called out to them, “Did I not forbid you from that tree and ‘did I not’ tell you that Shayṭān (Satan) is your sworn enemy?”* ○ ⁽²⁾ ﴾

How can this *nidāʾ*² (calling out) be attributed to internal Speech? A *nidāʾ*²—by consensus of the scholars of the Arabic language—can only occur through audible, verbalized words.

⁽¹⁾ [Tā-Hā 20:13].

⁽²⁾ [Al-Aʿrāf 7:22].

Thus, their claim that the Speech of Allāh is *nafsī* (internal) is a repugnant and senseless innovation, one that opposes both revelation and reason. The first to introduce this innovation was Abū Muḥammad Ibn Kullāb, and he was followed in it by Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ash‘arī, as noted by as-Sijzī in his “*Risālah to the People of Zabīd*,” and similarly by Shaykh al-Islām Ibn Taymiyyah in his work “*at-Tis‘īniyyah*.”

For this very reason, ar-Rāzī himself conceded:

*“The logical consequence of saying that the Speech of Allāh is internal and not verbal is **that Allāh does not speak!**”*

And ar-Rāzī spoke the truth—for even a mute person may speak inwardly to himself, yet he is still called mute because he cannot articulate or vocalize speech aloud.

A detailed refutation of the Ash‘arite position on the Speech of Allāh has been presented in my “*Commentary on al-Wāsiṭiyyah*” for whoever seeks further elaboration.

Ninth Issue: The Ash‘arites Assert that Allāh is Seen Without Direction

The Ash‘arites maintain that Allāh may be seen, but without direction. Thus, when speaking generally regarding the *Ru’yah* (Vision of Allāh), they state: “**Allāh is seen.**” Yet when they elaborate, they say: “**He is**

seen without direction.” Therefore, the actual implication of their statement is, in reality, that **Allāh is not seen at all.**

This doctrine was clearly stated by al-Bājūrī in his book “*Sharḥ Jawharat at-Tawḥīd*” (p. 246), and likewise affirmed in the book “*‘Awn al-Murīd*”⁽¹⁾. For this reason, ar-Rāzī himself admitted:

*“The reality of our position concerning the Vision of Allāh is
that He will not be seen.”*

And ar-Rāzī indeed spoke the truth—for that which is claimed to be seen “**without direction**” is, in reality, something **not seen at all.**

Tenth Issue: The Ash‘arites Deny the Rational Discernment of Good and Evil

The Ash‘arites deny *at-taḥsīn wa at-taqbīḥ al-‘aqliyayn*—the rational discernment of good and evil—maintaining that the intellect has no capacity to deem something morally good or evil in and of itself. They assert: “**Reason does not determine what is good or evil.**”

Ibn al-Qayyim critiqued this view in “*Madārij as-Sālikīn*,” saying:

*“According to this position, they would not be able to
distinguish between excrement and perfume!”*

⁽¹⁾ ‘Awn al-Murīd li-*Sharḥ Jawharat at-Tawḥīd* (2/638).

In their theology, the intellect is stripped of all moral judgment. Yet their approach to reason is inconsistent and unstable: **at times**, they exalt the intellect to such a degree that they reject revealed texts on its basis, **while at other times**, they deny its ability to judge anything as good or evil. This is a fundamental error.

For Allāh ﷻ has addressed our intellects, and were the intellect truly void of moral discernment, such divine addresses would be meaningless. Allāh ﷻ says:

﴿ أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ ﴾

﴿ *Do you not reason?* ﴾⁽¹⁾

Thus, to deny the rational basis of moral judgment is contrary to both revelation and observed reality.

This doctrine has been affirmed in “‘Awn al-Murīd”⁽²⁾, and similarly by al-Ījī⁽³⁾.

Eleventh Issue: The Ash‘arites Assert That Every Prophetic Sign—Except the Qur’ān—May Also Be a Saintly *Karāmah*

The Ash‘arites claim that every *mu‘jizah* (miracle)—as they term it—that occurs at the hands of a prophet could likewise occur as a

⁽¹⁾ Multiple locations in the Qur’ān.

⁽²⁾ ‘Awn al-Murīd li-Sharḥ Jawharat at-Tawḥīd (1/157).

⁽³⁾ Al-Mawāqif (p. 324).

karāmah (saintly marvel) for a **walī**, with the sole exception of the Qur’ān’s revelation. This position is erroneous for two reasons:

Firstly, referring to what occurs at the hands of the prophets as a **mu‘jizah** is incorrect. This term originates from the **mutakallimūn** (scholastic theologians). The proper Qur’ānic designation is **āyah** (sign), as Allāh ﷻ Himself says:

﴿ أَقْرَبَتِ السَّاعَةُ وَانْشَقَّ الْقَمَرُ ۖ وَإِنْ يَرَوْا ءَايَةً يُعْرِضُوا وَيَقُولُوا سِحْرٌ مُّسْتَمِرٌّ ۖ ﴾

{ *The Hour has drawn near and the moon was split* ¹ *in two*. ○ *Yet, whenever they see an āyah (a sign), they turn away, saying, “Same old magic!”* ○ }⁽¹⁾

Secondly, the prophets are distinguished by **āyāt** (signs) and **khawāriq li-l-‘ādah** (supernatural events) that are unique to them and are not shared by others. For this reason, Allāh ﷻ affirms:

﴿ لَقَدْ رَأَى مِنْ ءَايَاتِ رَبِّهِ الْكُبْرَى ۖ ﴾

{ *He certainly saw some of his Lord’s greatest āyāt (signs).* ○ }⁽²⁾

These are prophetic signs not granted to others, such as the splitting of the moon or the raising of the dead.

⁽¹⁾ [Al-Qamar 54:1-2].

⁽²⁾ [An-Najm 53:18].

This Ash‘arite belief was affirmed explicitly by as-Subkī in his book “*Ṭabaqāt*”⁽¹⁾.

Twelfth Issue: The Ash‘arites Claim That the First Obligation Upon the Morally Responsible Is Speculative Reasoning—Without Which Faith Is Invalid

The Ash‘arites assert that the first obligation upon the *mukallaf* (morally accountable individual) is *nazar*—speculative reasoning—and that faith is not valid without it.

Just imagine: a person is born upon *tawhīd* and raised upon sound monotheism, yet they say:

“Your faith is invalid until you engage in speculative reasoning!”

Some go even further, asserting:

“You must first doubt—go and question your religion, then return and investigate.”

And when asked:

*“What do you mean by *nazar* (speculative reasoning)?”*

⁽¹⁾ *Ṭabaqāt ash-Shāfi‘iyyah al-Kubrā* by as-Subkī.

—they reply:

*“It is to examine ***dalīl al-a‘rāḍ*** (the proof based on accidents) and ***ḥudūth al-ajsām*** (the proof of the temporal origination of bodies).”*

By Allāh, were the general Muslim public to know that the Ash‘arites consider anyone who does not understand the proof of accidents and the origination of bodies—and who does not affirm the existence of Allāh through this line of reasoning—to be either a disbeliever or a deviant Muslim, they would utterly wash their hands of them.

This doctrine was affirmed by prominent Ash‘arite scholars such as Abū al-Ma‘ālī al-Juwaynī⁽¹⁾ and al-Bāqillānī⁽²⁾.



⁽¹⁾ Al-Irshād (p. 25).

⁽²⁾ Al-Inṣāf (p. 33).

Some of the Contradictions of the Ash‘arites

Anyone endowed with intellect, insight, and objectivity—and who engages in critical reflection, let alone through the lens of the Qur’ān and the Sunnah—will observe in the Ash‘arites a remarkable level of contradiction. In reality, their creed is **Jahmī**, while outwardly they appear aligned with **Ahl as-Sunnah**. They are like a vehicle whose engine is **Jahmī**, but whose exterior is **Sunnī**.

This is akin to *al-bida‘ al-ḥarakiyyah* (the activist-oriented innovations) we have been afflicted with in recent decades—such as the **Surūriyyah**, followers of Muḥammad Surūr Zayn al-‘Ābidīn. Outwardly, they resemble the Salafīs, but in essence, they are *Ikhwānīs* (affiliated with the Muslim Brotherhood). So when an Ash‘arī or a Surūrī speaks in general terms, one might assume they are upon the way of the Salaf. But when they elaborate, the Ash‘arī reverts to the theology of the Jahmiyyah, and the Surūrī to the ideology of the *Ikhwān*. And whoever is like that will inevitably fall into constant contradiction.

Among the matters in which the Ash‘arites have contradicted themselves are the following:

First Contradiction: The Later Ash‘arites Oppose Their Predecessors

The later Ash‘arites are in clear opposition with their early *imāms* (leaders). **Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ash‘arī**, in his “*Risālah ilā Ahl ath-Thaḡhr*,”

explicitly affirmed the Attribute of *Istiawā*’ (Allāh’s Rising Over the Throne) upon its true meaning, and stated:

*“The Qadariyyah—meaning the Mu‘tazilah—say that **istawà** means **istawlà** (took possession).”*

Likewise, al-Bāqillānī, in his work “*at-Tamhīd*,” clearly stated that *istiawā*’ does not mean *istilā*’, and that those who interpret it as such are the Mu‘tazilah.

Now, this book—“*at-Tamhīd*” by Abū Bakr al-Bāqillānī—was printed by two editors:

- One was a **Muslim Ash‘arī**, who **omitted** this statement;
- The other was a **Christian disbeliever**, who **retained** al-Bāqillānī’s original words in his edition.

This statement is authentically established from al-Bāqillānī and was transmitted by Ibn Taymiyyah and others. Yet, when the edition produced by the Muslim Ash‘arī was released, they claimed that Ibn Taymiyyah and Ibn al-Qayyim were fabricating against al-Bāqillānī, alleging that he never refuted the interpretation of *istawà* as *istawlà*.

However, when a Christian publisher later printed “*at-Tamhīd*” on the basis of manuscript copies, he affirmed that al-Bāqillānī **had indeed made** this statement. Thus—ironically and regrettably—the Christian, despite his disbelief, was truthful, while the Ash‘arī editor, despite his Islām, was deceitful.

Thereafter, the Ash‘arites came to interpret *istawà* solely as *istawlà*, in direct opposition to their own leading authorities. This is among their most glaring inconsistencies. In fact, **Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ash‘arī** affirmed the Divine attributes of Face, Hands, and Eyes. At the same time, later figures—such as al-Juwaynī, ar-Rāzī, and those who followed their path—reinterpreted these attributes through *ta’wīl* (allegorical reinterpretation that constitutes distortion) and outright denied them.

Hence, Ibn Taymiyyah observed:

“The later the Ash‘arites became, the more corrupt they grew.”

He further noted:

*“The majority of allegorical interpretations that constitute distortion found today among the Ash‘arites are the very same interpretations of **Bishr al-Marīsī**—which were emphatically rejected by the Salaf.”*

Also, Ibn al-Qayyim, in “*Ijtimā‘ al-Juyūsh al-Islāmiyyah*,” stated:

“The later Ash‘arites are more misguided than their predecessors, and their condition worsens the further they drift in time.”

What has just been presented is among the clearest examples of that degeneration.

Second Contradiction: The Ash‘arites Swing Between Exalting and Nullifying Reason

The Ash‘arites exaggerated the role of reason to the extent that they gave it precedence over revelation, as exemplified by **al-Qānūn al-Kullī** (the Universal Principle) of **ar-Rāzī**, as previously noted. Yet in stark contradiction, they **stripped the intellect of its function** when they denied **at-tahsīn wa at-taqbīḥ al-‘aqlī**—the principle of the intellect’s capacity to discern good and evil.

Thus, their position toward reason swings between two extremes: **on one end**, they exalt it to the point of overruling revelation; **on the other**, they deny it the most basic function of moral discernment. This inconsistency reveals a more profound methodological imbalance—caught between rationalist excess and intellectual paralysis.

Third Contradiction: The Ash‘arites Reinterpret the Texts of Attributes While Affirming the Reports of the Hereafter—Despite the Attributes Being Better Established

The Ash‘arites engaged in **ta’wīl** (allegorical reinterpretation that constitutes distortion) of the texts concerning Allāh’s Attributes, while affirming the reports related to the Resurrection, the Scale, and other affairs of **al-ma‘ād** (the Hereafter)—even though the evidences affirming the Attributes are far more numerous and explicit than those affirming the events of the Hereafter.

Thus, had reinterpretation truly been warranted, it would have been more fitting to apply it to the reports of the Hereafter rather than the Attributes.

This inconsistency was one of the very criticisms leveled against them by the philosophers—most notably **Abū al-Walīd Ibn Rushd**, the philosopher—who said in response to the Ash‘arites:

“We philosophers allegorically reinterpret the reports of the Hereafter, while you reinterpret the texts concerning the divine Attributes. But we are closer to the truth—for the evidences for the Attributes are stronger. You ought to affirm the Attributes and not reinterpret them. And if reinterpretation is to be employed, it is more appropriate that it be applied to the texts concerning the Hereafter.”

Fourth Contradiction: The Ash‘arites Refrained from Affirming the Attributes They Reinterpreted—Out of Fear of *Tashbīh*

The Ash‘arites refrained from affirming the very Attributes they subjected to *ta’wīl* (allegorical reinterpretation that constitutes distortion), claiming this was to avoid falling into *tashbīh* (likening Allāh to His creation—anthropomorphism). Yet paradoxically, they were able to affirm for Allāh a ***dhāt*** (Essence) and affirm a ***dhāt*** for the creation—while managing to do so without falling into *tashbīh* (likening Allāh to His creation—anthropomorphism) in that case.

However, they were unable—or unwilling—to apply that same rationale to the rest of the Attributes.

For this reason, the **Imāms** of Ahl as-Sunnah, such as Ibn Taymiyyah, refuted them by saying:

*“The ruling concerning the Attributes is the same as the ruling concerning the **Dhāt** (Essence); there is no distinction between them.”*

Among those who likewise affirmed that there is no difference between affirming the Essence and affirming the Attributes were **al-Khaṭṭābī** and **al-Khaṭīb al-Baghḍādī**.

Fifth Contradiction: The Ash‘arites Affirm Certain Attributes but Deny Others—Claiming *Tashbīh* Only When It Suits Them

The Ash‘arites affirm specific Attributes of Allāh—such as Hearing and Sight—without claiming that affirming them entails **tashbīh** (likening Allāh to His creation—anthropomorphism). Yet, with other Attributes, they assert that affirming them necessarily leads to **tashbīh**. This is a clear and evident contradiction.

For this reason, the **Imāms** of Ahl as-Sunnah—such as **Shaykh al-Islām Ibn Taymiyyah**—refuted their inconsistency, stating:

“The ruling concerning some of the Attributes is the same as the ruling concerning the others.”

Sixth Contradiction: The Ash‘arites Selectively Use Reason to Affirm Seven Attributes—Then Reject It for the Rest

The Ash‘arites employ reason to affirm only seven of Allāh’s Attributes, known as the “*ṣifāt al-ma‘ānī*” (Attributes of meaning)⁽¹⁾. **They argue:** the existence of created beings indicates Allāh’s **Power**; the specific differentiation of each creation indicates His **Will**; and the precision in creation indicates His **Knowledge**. Then, they assert that these three—**Power**, **Will**, and **Knowledge**—can only be found in one who is **Living**, so they affirm **Life** for Allāh. From there, they reason: every living being possesses **Hearing**, **Sight**, and **Speech**—thus they affirm those as well.

However, they are refuted by a clear analogy: Allāh’s punishment of some people is evidence of His **Anger**, and His honoring of others

⁽¹⁾ *Ṣifāt al-Ma‘ānī* (Attributes of Meaning):

This term refers to a category of divine Attributes affirmed by both the **Ahl as-Sunnah wa al-Jamā‘ah** and the **Ash‘arites**, though with differing theological underpinnings. According to **the Ahl as-Sunnah**, *ṣifāt al-ma‘ānī* are among the affirmed, **revealed** Attributes of Allāh—such as Knowledge, Will, Power, Life, Hearing, Sight, and Speech—that are affirmed as they have come in the Qur’ān and Sunnah without **tahrīf** (distortion), **ta‘ṭīl** (negation), **takyīf** (specification of modality), or **tashbih** (likening Allāh to His creation—anthropomorphism). These Attributes are understood to be truly and eternally belonging to Allāh in a manner befitting His Majesty, and without analogy to the creation.

In contrast, the **Ash‘arites** define *ṣifāt al-ma‘ānī* as seven eternal, subsisting Attributes that inhere in Allāh’s Essence (*qā’imah bi-dh-dhāt*) and from which acts originate. They affirm these Attributes on the basis of **rational necessity**, not solely transmitted texts, and assert that they are “neither identical to nor other than” Allāh’s Essence (*lā hiya huwa wa-lā ghayruhu*). Notably, they restrict affirmation to these seven while rejecting or reinterpreting other revealed Attributes through **ta’wīl** (allegorical reinterpretation that constitutes distortion), which distinguishes their position from that of the early **Salaf**.

is evidence of His **Love**. So just as reason was used to affirm the seven Attributes, it must also be used consistently to affirm other Attributes—such as **Love**, **Anger**, and the like.

The Ash‘arites, however, rejected this consistency, thereby falling into contradiction.

Shaykh al-Islām Ibn Taymiyyah reiterated this critique frequently in his works, such as “Sharḥ Ḥadīth an-Nuzūl,” his “*Commentary on al-‘Aqīdah al-Aṣḥāniyyah*,” and most powerfully in his seminal treatise “*at-Tadmuriyyah*”. Indeed, their contradictions are so extensive that it is rightly said:

“Contradiction is a word—and the Ash‘arites are its meaning.”



The Concurrence of the Scholars in Declaring the Ash‘arites to Be Innovators

Many have been misled by the assumption that none declared the Ash‘arites to be innovators and misguided except Shaykh al-Islām Ibn Taymiyyah or the Ḥanbalis. This is a manifest error, for the senior **Imāms** of all four **madhāhib** (schools of thought) were united in opposing and diverging from the Ash‘arites, and in asserting that their methodology stands in contradiction to the path of Ahl as-Sunnah.

Ibn ‘Abd al-Hādī—namely the later Ibn al-Mubarrad—authored a treatise entitled “*Jam‘ al-Juyūsh wa ad-Dasākir fī ar-Radd ‘alā Ibn ‘Asākir*,” in refutation of Ibn ‘Asākir’s work “*Tabyīn Kaḍhib al-Muftarī*”. In it, he cited the verdicts of one thousand scholars who had declared the Ash‘arites to be innovators. He said:

*“And if I wished, I could have cited this from two thousand
scholars—or ten thousand, or even more.”*

This treatise was critically edited and verified at the Islamic University of Madinah and stands as a valuable reference in demonstrating the misguidance of the Ash‘arites and the repeated judgments of the scholars concerning their deviation.

What follows are select statements from scholars of the four **madhāhib** in declaring the Ash‘arites to be innovators:

Firstly: The Ḥanafī Madhhab

Imām Abū Ja‘far aṭ-Ṭaḥāwī authored the well-known “‘Aqīdah at-Ṭaḥāwīyyah,” in which he stated:

*“This is a presentation of the creed of **Ahl as-Sunnah wa al-Jamā‘ah**, according to the school of the jurists of this religion: Abū Ḥanīfah an-Nu‘mān ibn Thābit al-Kūfī, Abū Yūsuf Ya‘qūb ibn Ibrāhīm al-Anṣārī, and Abū ‘Abd Allāh Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan ash-Shaybānī—may Allāh be pleased with them all—and what they believed regarding the fundamentals of the religion and by which they worship the Lord of the Worlds.”*

Aṭ-Ṭaḥāwī made it clear that whatever opposes this creed is an innovation. Accordingly, the theological positions held by ar-Rāzī and al-Juwaynī constitute innovation, for they oppose what Imām Abū Ja‘far aṭ-Ṭaḥāwī established in his creed.

Secondly: The Mālikī Madhhab

The Mālikīs are among the most severe in their stance against the Ash‘arites, and their criticisms are especially forceful. Among the strongest of these is what Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr narrated in his book “*Jāmi‘ Bayān al-‘Ilm wa Faḍlihi*,” quoting the early Mālikī scholar Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn Khuwayza Mindād, who said:

“The testimony of the people of innovation and desires is not accepted... The people of desires, according to Mālik and all our

*companions, are the people of **kalām** (speculative theology). Every practitioner of **kalām** is among the people of desires and innovation—whether he is Ash‘arī or otherwise. His testimony is not accepted in Islām, he is to be boycotted, and he is to be disciplined for his innovation.”⁽¹⁾*

Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr  further stated:

*“The scholars of jurisprudence and **ḥadīth** across all regions have unanimously agreed that the people of **kalām** (speculative theology) are people of innovation and deviation, and they are not considered among the ranks of the jurists by any scholarly consensus.”⁽²⁾*

This makes clear that the Ash‘arites are not considered among the true people of knowledge, but rather are counted among **ahl al-ahwā’** (the people of vain desires).

Thirdly: The Shāfi‘ī Madhhab

Many Shāfi‘ī scholars have criticized **‘ilm al-kalām** (speculative theology) in general, and the Ash‘arites in particular. Among them is their great Imām, Imām ash-Shāfi‘ī, who said:

⁽¹⁾ Jāmi‘ Bayān al-‘Ilm wa Faḍlihi (2/942).

⁽²⁾ Ibid.

*“My ruling concerning the people of **kalām** (speculative theology) is that they should be beaten with palm branches and paraded among the clans and tribes. This is the recompense for one who abandoned the Book and the Sunnah and took up **kalām** (speculative theology).”⁽¹⁾*

And the Ash‘arites—by their own admission—are among the people of **kalām**. Thus, this is what the very Imām of the Shāfi‘ī is said concerning them.

Among the prominent scholars of the Shāfi‘ī school is Abū Ḥāmid al-Isfarā‘īnī⁽²⁾, who was especially severe in his opposition to Abū Bakr al-Bāqillānī. The warnings of Abū Ḥāmid against al-Bāqillānī were so well known and forceful that, it is said, al-Bāqillānī would cover his face when entering the public bathhouse—lest people recognize him.

Another Shāfi‘ī scholar, Abū al-Ḥasan al-Karkhī, was similarly harsh toward the Ash‘arites. He even composed a poem in which he declared them to be innovators and astray—a poem recorded by as-Subkī in “*Ṭabaqāt ash-Shāfi‘iyyah*”.

Also among those severe against the Ash‘arites was Abū Ismā‘īl ‘Abd Allāh ibn Muḥammad al-Harawī, who authored a treatise

⁽¹⁾ Jāmi‘ Bayān al-‘Ilm wa Faḍlihi (2/941), No. (1794).

⁽²⁾ There are two scholars named al-Isfarāyīnī: The first is Abū Ḥāmid al-Isfarāyīnī and the second is Abū Ishāq al-Isfarāyīnī. The intended reference here is to Abū Ḥāmid - may Allah have mercy on him - a Salafī in creed and an outstanding jurist whose equal is rarely found.

criticizing *‘ilm al-kalām*. In fact, he went so far as to make statements implying the *takfīr* (excommunication) of the Ash‘arites—**though such a judgment is not endorsed.**

Fourthly: The Ḥanbalī Madhhab

The stance of the Ḥanbalīs regarding the Ash‘arites is too well-known to require extensive elaboration. Their Imām, Imām Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal رحمہ اللہ, was known for his harsh condemnation of the *mutakallimūn* (practitioners of speculative theology). Among those he declared to be misguided and an innovator was Ibn Kullāb, as reported by Ibn Khuzaymah and others.

Ibn Kullāb was the originator of the heretical notion known as *bid‘at al-lafz*—claiming that Allāh’s Speech is merely a *ḥikāyah* (narrative or indirect representation), and not actual, articulated Speech.

Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ash‘arī later adopted this very position. Therefore, Imām Aḥmad’s declaration of innovation against Ibn Kullāb logically extends to Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ash‘arī, who came after him and endorsed the same creed.

Following Imām Aḥmad, the Ḥanbalī scholars consistently and repeatedly declared the Ash‘arites to be innovators and misguided. Their critiques are extensive, and many theological clashes occurred between them and the Ash‘arites—far too numerous to recount in full.

Among the prominent Ḥanbalī authorities who condemned the Ash‘arites was Shaykh al-Islām Ibn Taymiyyah, who stated:

*“When the devil seeks to imitate an angel—and it is explicitly denied that the speech could be from an accursed devil—this confirms that the Messenger mentioned is one chosen from among the angels. The Qur’ān’s attribution to this Messenger at times, and to that one at other times, indicates that it is an attribution of transmission and delivery, not of origination or composition—as claimed by some of **the innovating Ash‘arites.**”⁽¹⁾*

Objections to Ibn Taymiyyah’s Declaration of the Ash‘arites as Innovators

Some have raised apparent objections regarding Shaykh al-Islām Ibn Taymiyyah’s explicit classification of the Ash‘arites as innovators:

First Objection: That he described them in certain places as being from **Ahl as-Sunnah**.

Second Objection: That in his work “*Bayān Talbīs al-Jahmiyyah*,” he stated that the Ash‘arites are the sect closest to **Ahl as-Sunnah**.

Third Objection: That in the same book, he affirmed that the Ash‘arites are considered **Ahl as-Sunnah** in lands where no group remains except the Mu‘tazilites and the Rāfiḍah.

Response to the First Objection: His reference to them as “**Ahl as-Sunnah**” is to be understood in a broad, **general societal**

⁽¹⁾ Majmū‘ al-Fatāwā (2/50).

sense, not according to the precise **Shar‘ī (legally defined)** usage. He was merely noting that **among the general public**, those who are not Rāfiḍī are commonly labeled “**Ahl as-Sunnah**.” This would include Mu‘tazilites and others. Thus, he was not endorsing the use of the term in its correct legal meaning, for **Ahl al-Ḥaqq (the people of truth) are one distinct saved sect**, as has been clarified in the “*Commentary on al-Wāsiṭiyyah*”.

Response to the Second Objection: What he stated is accurate—that the Ash‘arites are **closer to Ahl as-Sunnah** than the Mu‘tazilites, and the Mu‘tazilites are closer than the Jahmiyyah. However, **this relative proximity does not imply soundness or orthodoxy**. The Ash‘arites are still upon manifest misguidance. Yet, as it is said, **darkness is of varying degrees**, and some forms are more profound and more severe than others.

For example, Christians are closer to Muslims than the Jews, yet both remain disbelievers. Allāh ﷻ says:

﴿ * لَتَجِدَنَّ أَشَدَّ النَّاسِ عَدَاوَةً لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا الْيَهُودَ
وَالَّذِينَ أَشْرَكُوا وَلَتَجِدَنَّ أَقْرَبَهُمْ مَوَدَّةً لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا
الَّذِينَ قَالُوا إِنَّا نَصْرِي ﴾

﴿ *You will surely find the most intense of the people in animosity toward the believers to be the Jews and those who associate others with Allāh; and you will find the*

nearest of them in affection to the believers those who
say, “We are Christians.”⁽¹⁾

Hence, **relative closeness** does not indicate correctness.

Response to the Third Objection: In some of his statements, Ibn Taymiyyah says: “**They are called Ahl as-Sunnah**”—meaning in lands where only the Rāfiḍah and the Mu‘tazilah remain, the Ash‘arites are, **according to the ordinary people**, regarded as Ahl as-Sunnah. **This is not an affirmation of reality**, but a description of perception in that context.

This clarification makes it **abundantly clear** that Ibn Taymiyyah did not consider the Ash‘arites to be from Ahl as-Sunnah in the true, Shar‘ī sense. Supporting this are two points:

1. He has **explicitly declared them to be innovators**, as already mentioned. And the speech of a scholar is to be understood in light of itself, as **Ibn Taymiyyah himself established** in his work “*ar-Radd ‘alā al-Bakrī*”.
2. He only referred to them as Ahl as-Sunnah in **contexts of relative comparison**, in lands devoid of any group besides the Rāfiḍah and the Mu‘tazilah. Therefore, his usage is **comparative, not absolute**.



⁽¹⁾ [Al-Māʿidah 5:82].

The Ash‘arites: Extremists in Takfir (Excommunication)

Contemporary Ash‘arites—and their Māturīdī counterparts—persist in attempting to falsely attribute **takfir** (excommunication) to **Ahl as-Sunnah**, unjustly branding them as “**Wahhābīs**.” They slanderously claim that the so-called “**Wahhābīs**” are extremists who readily excommunicate others. However, when confronted with evidence, one finds nothing but a mirage that only the ignorant mistake for substance.

The reality is quite the opposite: it is the Ash‘arites who are extreme in takfir. A glaring example of this is their internal disagreement over the ruling of the **muqallid**—the one who imitates others in belief without knowledge. One faction among them explicitly declares the **muqallid** to be a disbeliever whose **īmān** is invalid. Another faction affirms the validity of his **īmān** but still considers him sinful for his imitation. Yet even this second group does not deem the view of **takfir** held by the first faction to be deviant or anomalous; rather, they consider it a credible scholarly position.

Thus, according to one faction of the Ash‘arites, **nearly all common Muslims are disbelievers**, except for a rare few. And the other faction—though differing with this verdict—nonetheless refuses to censure or repudiate it.

Is this not the very definition of extremism in **takfir**?

What is even more astonishing is that some of them hold that the **muqallid** remains in a state of ignorance unless he grasps speculative

theological arguments such as the “**Dalīl al-A‘rād**” (Proof of Accidents) and “**Ḥudūth al-Ajsām**” (the Temporal Origination of Bodies). As for studying the Qur’ān and Sunnah, in their view, that is insufficient for one’s **īmān** to be sound!

Now consider the following citations from their own leading scholars:

Al-Ḥalīmī al-Ash‘arī stated:

*“One of these two—namely the **muqallid** (blind follower) and the skeptic—is not a Muslim. As for the **muqallid**, it is because he only intended by his religion to conform with a group... So whoever recognizes the truth as truth and obligation as obligation in this fashion has not truly known reality. To hold a religious belief without knowledge of its foundation is invalid. And Allāh knows best.”⁽¹⁾*

Ibn at-Tilimsānī al-Ash‘arī stated that the discussion concerning their disbelief or faith pertains to what lies between them and Allāh. In contrast, in worldly rulings, we judge only by outward appearances. He said:

“It has been answered that there is no dispute concerning applying the rulings of Islām to them on that basis—for it is presumed to indicate faith and inward affirmation. We have no other avenue except this. For that reason, the Prophet ﷺ said:

⁽¹⁾ Al-Minhāj fī Shu‘ab al-Īmān (2/145).

«Why didn’t you split open his heart to know what was in it?»

The discussion pertains only to what is between the servant and his Lord.”⁽¹⁾

Thus, in this, he affirms that they are disbelievers inwardly—even if not outwardly!

As-Sanūsī al-Ash‘arī commented:

“An objection was raised against the view that the *muqallid* (blind follower) is not a believer—namely, that this would necessitate declaring the majority of the common Muslims as disbelievers, and they constitute the greater part of this Ummah. This, in turn, would undermine what is established—that our master and Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ is the Prophet with the greatest number of followers, and it has been reported that his radiant Ummah will comprise two-thirds of the people of Paradise. **The response:** What is intended by ‘*dalīl*’ (the proof) that is obligatory for all morally accountable persons to know is *ad-dalīl al-jumalī* (the general proof)—that which, in a general way, yields knowledge and inner tranquility regarding the tenets of *īmān*. It is not sufficient that one’s heart says: ‘I don’t know—I simply repeated what I heard others say.’ Nor is it required that one know the detailed rational arguments in the

⁽¹⁾ *Sharḥ al-Ma‘ālim fī Uṣūl al-Fiqh* (p. 455).

*fashion of the **mutakallimūn** (theologians), involving refinement and arrangement of proofs...”⁽¹⁾*

This clearly indicates that, according to him, mere **taqlīd** (imitation or blind following) does not suffice—rather, some form of rational proof is still a condition for faith.

Muḥammad ibn ‘Umar al-Malālī al-Tilimsānī said:

*“From this it becomes clear that **taqlīd** (blind following) is not valid in the science of **tawḥīd**, according to the view of many scholars. The reality of **taqlīd** is the firm acceptance of another’s statement without evidence. The **muqallid** (blind follower) possesses no knowledge; his position is merely firm conviction based on the statement of another.”⁽²⁾*

This is an explicit statement declaring the invalidity of the **muqallid’s īmān** (faith).

Abū Ishāq al-Isfarāyīnī attributed to Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ash‘arī the view that the **īmān** (faith) of the **muqallid** (blind follower) is not valid. Then az-Zarkashī commented:

*“This view—that the **īmān** of the **muqallid** is invalid—became well-known as being attributed to al-Ash‘arī. However,*

⁽¹⁾ *Sharḥ Umm al-Barāhīn* (p. 17).

⁽²⁾ *Sharḥ al-Ma‘ālim fī Uṣūl al-Fiqh* (p. 455).

Abū al-Qāsim al-Qushayrī, Shaykh Abū Muḥammad al-Juwaynī and others among the verifying scholars denied that this was authentically his position. It has also been said that perhaps what he intended was accepting another’s statement without any proof.”⁽¹⁾

Thus, this view is famously attributed to al-Ash‘arī, though there has been scholarly dispute over its ascription to him—so its attribution is not novel.

Also, ‘Abd ar-Raḥmān an-Nīsābūrī said:

*“The first obligation upon a morally responsible person is to intend sound **naẓar** (rational reflection) that leads to knowledge of the origination of the world and affirmation of the Creator’s existence. The evidence for this is the consensus of rational minds regarding the obligation of knowing Allāh the Exalted. And it is known rationally that the origination of the world and the existence of the Creator cannot be known except through reflection and contemplation. Thus, whatever is necessary as a means to fulfilling an obligation is itself obligatory.”⁽²⁾*

⁽¹⁾ Al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ fī Uṣūl al-Fiqh (8/326).

⁽²⁾ Al-Ghunyah fī Uṣūl ad-Dīn (p. 55).

This reflects an extreme form of *‘ilm al-kalām* (speculative theology/theological rationalism) on the part of this Ash‘arī.



The Difference Between Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ash‘arī and the Later Ash‘arites

Although the Ash‘arites affiliate themselves with Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ash‘arī, the disparity between his creed and theirs is substantial. The later Ash‘arites are, in reality, upon the creed of al-Juwaynī and ar-Rāzī—not upon the creed of Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ash‘arī.

His
Affirmation
of Hands,
Eyes and
Coming

In his book “*Maqālāt al-Islāmiyyīn*,” Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ash‘arī documented the creed of **Ahl al-Ḥadīth**, wherein he affirmed that Allāh has **Two Hands** and **Two Eyes** *bilā kayfiyyah* (without asking how or modality).

He also affirmed that *īmān* (faith) increases and decreases. Furthermore, he recorded numerous positions in which he clearly diverged from what the later Ash‘arites upheld.

He concluded with the decisive statement:

*“And with everything we have mentioned from their
statements, we affirm and adhere to it. Our success is only
through Allāh. He is sufficient for us and the best disposer of
affairs. We seek His assistance, rely upon Him, and to Him is the
final return.”⁽¹⁾*

⁽¹⁾ *Maqālāt al-Islāmiyyīn* (1/345).

He further stated:

“They have unanimously agreed that Allāh, exalted is He, has always existed—**Living, Able, Knowing, Willing, Speaking, Hearing, and Seeing**—just as He described Himself...”⁽¹⁾

Continuing:

“And they **unanimously agreed** that He, exalted is He, Hears and Sees; that He possesses **Two Hands** which are outstretched; that the entire earth will be in **His Grasp** on the Day of Resurrection, and the heavens will be rolled up in **His Right Hand**—without this implying limbs—and that **His Two Hands** are something different from His **ni‘mah** (blessing). Evidence for this is His honoring of Ādam ﷺ by creating him with **His Hand**, and His reproach of Iblīs for his arrogance in refusing to prostrate, despite that honor, as He ﷻ says:

﴿ مَا مَنَعَكَ أَنْ تَسْجُدَ لِمَا خَلَقْتُ بِإِيْدِي ﴾

﴿ What prevented you from prostrating to what I created with My Own Two Hands? ﴾⁽²⁾”

⁽¹⁾ Risālatuhu li-Ahl ath-Thaḡhr (p. 210).

⁽²⁾ [ṣād 38:75].

He then added:

“And they **unanimously agreed** that He, exalted is He, **shall come** on the Day of Resurrection, and the angels [shall be arranged] rank upon rank.” ⁽¹⁾

Until he said:

His
Affirmation
of ‘Ulūw
(Highness)
and Rejection
of “Istawā” as
“Istīlā”

“And that He ﷻ is **above His heavens, upon His Throne**, distinct from His earth. This is evidenced by His saying:

﴿ءَأَمِنْتُمْ مَّن فِي السَّمَاءِ أَن يَخْسِفَ بِكُمُ الْأَرْضَ﴾

﴿ Do you feel secure that He who is above would not cause the earth to swallow you? ○ ﴾ ⁽²⁾

Also, Allāh’s ﷻ saying:

﴿إِلَيْهِ يَصْعَدُ الْكَلِمُ الطَّيِّبُ وَالْعَمَلُ الصَّالِحُ يَرْفَعُهُ﴾

﴿ To Him †alone† good words ascend, and righteous deeds are raised up by Him. ﴾ ⁽³⁾

As well as His ﷻ saying:

﴿الرَّحْمَنُ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ اسْتَوَى﴾

⁽¹⁾ Ibid.

⁽²⁾ [Al-Mulk 67:16].

⁽³⁾ [Fāṭir 35:10].

{ *Ar-Raḥmān Rose Over the Throne.* ○ }⁽¹⁾

Thus, His *Istiḥā* (Raising Over) the Throne is not *istilā* (seizing or conquering), as claimed by the Qadariyyah (i.e., the Mu‘tazilah), for He has always been exalted over all things.”⁽²⁾

This is the explicit creed of Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ash‘arī. And yet, the Ash‘arites of today are unanimous in interpreting *Istawā* (He Rose) as *istawlā* (He conquered)—an interpretation that their own Imām clearly rejected. His statements in “*al-Ibānah*” are abundant on this matter. Therefore, the later Ash‘arites follow the creed of ar-Rāzī and al-Juwaynī, not that of Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ash‘arī.

Ar-Rāzī’s Allegorical Reinterpretation That Constitutes Distortion—and His Contradiction of Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ash‘arī

Consider ar-Rāzī’s interpretation of Allāh’s ﷻ saying:

{ هَلْ يَنْظُرُونَ إِلَّا أَنْ يَأْتِيَهُمُ اللَّهُ }

{ *Are they waiting for Allāh* ‘Himself’ *to come to them?* }⁽³⁾

⁽¹⁾ [Ṭā-Hā 20:5].

⁽²⁾ Ibid.

⁽³⁾ [Al-Baqarah 2:210].

Ar-Rāzī said:

*“The intended meaning of the **āyah** (verse) is that the **coming of Allāh’s Signs is described as His Coming**, in order to magnify the significance of the Signs—just as one says, ‘The king has come,’ when a mighty army arrives from his side. **Alternatively**, it may mean: ‘Are they waiting for anything except for the **Command of Allāh?**’”⁽¹⁾*

Observe how he engages in **ta’wīl** (allegorical reinterpretation that constitutes distortion) regarding the **Majī’ (Coming)** of Allāh. In contrast, Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ash‘arī was upon the opposite, affirming the Coming of Allāh as He described Himself, **bilā kayfiyyah** (without asking how or modality), and without resorting to distortion.

Similarly, both ar-Rāzī⁽²⁾ and al-Āmidī⁽³⁾ interpreted the meaning of **Istiwā’** (Allāh’s Rising Over the Throne) to be **Istilā’** (conquest and domination).

Allāhu Akbar! Witness how they have reinterpreted **Istiwā’** as **Istilā’**—an interpretation that their very own Imām, Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ash‘arī, explicitly rejected. Thus, they are in contradiction to his creed in reality, even if they continue to affiliate themselves with him in name only.

⁽¹⁾ Asās at-Taqdīs (p. 103).

⁽²⁾ Asās at-Taqdīs (p. 156).

⁽³⁾ Ghāyat al-Marām (p. 141).

A Final Appeal

It is also important to realize that many among the Ash‘arites are unaware of the true substance of their theological position. Among them are those who are sincere and well-meaning but have become confused due to inherited doctrine. Therefore, draw near to them, discuss with them, and clarify the true nature of the Ash‘arite creed, for perhaps Allāh will make that a means of their guidance.

Let us reflect upon the Words of Allāh ﷻ:

﴿ اذْعُ إِلَى سَبِيلِ رَبِّكَ بِالْحِكْمَةِ وَالْمَوْعِظَةِ الْحَسَنَةِ وَجِدِّ لَهُمْ
بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَرُ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِمَنْ ضَلَّ عَنْ سَبِيلِهِ
وَهُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِالْمُهْتَدِينَ ﴾ (١٢٥)

﴿ Invite ‘all’ to the Way of your Lord with wisdom
and kind advice, and only debate with them in
the best manner. Surely your Lord ‘alone’ knows best
who has strayed from His Way and who is ‘rightly’
guided. ○ ⁽¹⁾ ﴾

So, those who are receptive to the truth—engage with them and reason with them sincerely. But as for those who are obstinate and arrogant, then turn away from them, as Allāh ﷻ says:

⁽¹⁾ [An-Naḥl 16:125].

﴿ * وَلَا تُجَادِلُوا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ إِلَّا بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ إِلَّا
الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا مِنْهُمْ ﴾

﴿ Do not argue with the People of the Book unless
gracefully, except with those of them who act
wrongfully. ﴾⁽¹⁾

That is, those who persist in injustice and defiance—do not argue with them, for such debate yields no benefit.

I ask Allāh—the Most Merciful, the Ever Bestower of Mercy —to guide those Muslims who have strayed, to unite the Muslims upon the **Straight Path**, and to gather us and our loved ones in **al-Firdaws al-A‘lā**.



⁽¹⁾ [Al-ʿAnkabūt 29:46].